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ABSTRACT

This manual, designed for parents and professionals in psychology, social work, and education, attempts to increase understanding of child advocacy and offers practical suggestions on how to become an advocate for an individual child. The handbook provides a systematic way to monitor the environment of a child, to determine whether his individual needs for personal growth are being met, to evaluate these needs, and to develop options for improving negative situations. The booklet describes a sequence of three tasks, each with a number of carefully delineated sub-steps to be carried out by the child advocate: (1) monitoring (Actively seeking information about the child and how he experiences different situations), (2) assessing (deciding whether a situational change is needed), and (3) advocating (Acting to bring about a change). Observation and assessment worksheet samples are included. (CS)

To Protect

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To Protect and Respect

Advocacy For Your Child

A Child Advocate's Handbook

by John W. Pelosi and Sandra L. Johnson

Child Advocacy System Project
Learning Institute of North Carolina
1006 Lamond Avenue
Durham, North Carolina

August 1974

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Dr. Leo Rippy, Jr., contributed importantly to the design of the process. He worked with us and all project staff to help us think more clearly about what we were saying. His logic helped us to be more logical, and his thinking is reflected in the procedure presented herein.

Robert Browning, Harvey Clanton, John Green, and Joy Kincaid were members of the project's Child Advocacy Team. They not only used the process directly with and for children, they helped us work it out. They forced us to be more practical when we wanted to hide in theory. They were constant critics and testers of the methods we worked out together.

Dr. Arthur Robarge and Mrs. Adele Richardson Ray, during different periods, completed the project staff by adding a research perspective to our efforts. This perspective kept us from "re-inventing the wheel," while allowing us to retain the structures necessary for producing something we hope is useful.

In a similar way, we used Dr. Edward Donlon's deep experience with children to keep us from getting too rigid in thinking about children. His comprehensive knowledge about child uniqueness served as an important frame of reference.

Without the support of Dr. Paul Ackerman and Mel Ladson, the project would not have had the results it did. Their help and encouragement contributed importantly to providing the opportunity to get the work accomplished. Their insistence on clarity helped us to be clearer about what we wanted to accomplish.

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John Pelosi and Sandra Johnson

FOREWORD

The widely hailed 1970 report, *Crisis in Child Mental Health*, listed as one of the major recommendations of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children the development of a nationwide system of child advocacy.

Child advocacy has been a growing movement across the nation during the past decade. In North Carolina, the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC) has for the past three years administered a Child Advocacy System Project. The project tested ways in which community resources can effectively and systematically be made available to children and young people.

This booklet, *Advocacy for Your Child*, is one of the products of that project. Although intended primarily for parents, it can also be used by others who are serving as advocates for individual children. We hope it will be useful to those who are committed to helping children receive the services, programs, and resources they need to reach their full potential in our society.

John R. B. Hawes, Jr.
Executive Director
Learning Institute of North Carolina

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PREFACE

This handbook is one of the results of the Child Advocacy System Project. The project's general purpose was to learn about the concept of child advocacy and its practical application in communities, and neighborhoods where children live. A team of four advocates worked with about 120 children, and their parents, friends, and teachers. The team also worked with community citizens and professional workers who influenced the lives of these children.

The need for this handbook came out of our experience in the project. It is written for any person who has a close relationship with a child and who wants to act as that child's advocate.

Another handbook, *How to Monitor Agencies That Serve Children*, was also produced as a result of our experiences in the Child Advocacy System Project. It describes methods which a group of community citizens use to find out how well services are provided to children. The methods described in each handbook serve as different ways to assure that a community is fulfilling its responsibility to its youngest citizens.

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ABOUT CHILD ADVOCACY and THIS HANDBOOK

Child advocacy involves making sure children receive the "services" necessary for healthy growth and development. The function of child advocacy is not to provide these services but to see that children get them from whomever is responsible for providing them.

This handbook is intended to help you be able to advocate for a child. The child may be close to you because you are his parent, or because you are his friend.

We will describe a series of steps we call the adovcacy process. This process involves three main tasks: knowing the child and the different situations he's in, deciding whether the situations are good for him or if they need to be changed, and, if change is needed, acting to make the change. Before we begin describing the advocacy process we want to make a number of points about advocacy.

The Difference between Service and Advocacy

Many people who live close to or work closely with children provide both a service function and an advocacy function. Consider these examples:

A teacher helping a child learn to read is providing an educational service. A mother, checking with the teacher about her child's reading ability, is acting as the child's advocate.

A teacher who suspects that a child in her room has a hearing problem, and who follows up by getting the child examined by a hearing specialist, is acting as the child's advocate.

A father who takes his daughter to the city playground and watches her while she plays is performing a kind of "service" for her. If he notices that some of the equipment is unsafe, reports it to the city recreation department, and makes sure the equipment is made safe, he is advocating for his daughter, as well as other children who play there.

A mother provides a service to her child by feeding and clothing him. A social service worker, checking out a report from a neighbor about a child who doesn't look reasonably well-fed or clothed, acts as an advocate for that child. If she finds out the child is seriously neglected, and acts in ways to change the child's situation so he is no longer neglected, she is advocating for the child. The neighbor who made the report about possible neglect also acted as the child's advocate.

These examples illustrate the difference between service and advocacy. "Service" is providing the child with something he needs, whether it's food, clothing, education, or recreation.

Advocacy involves checking to see that he's getting the "service."

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Interplay Between Service and Advocacy

Very often the interplay between service and advocacy happens naturally. We who are parents carry around the main responsibility of providing service and seeing to it that our children are getting things they need from others. But if we're lucky we have a fair amount of help.

A Little League baseball coach we know told us about a child who seemed to have very good athletic ability. The child made all the right moves, but he'd often miss the ball in catching or batting. The coach wondered if the boy had a vision problem. He was concerned enough to work with the child's parents, the social service agency, and the local Lions Club to get the child's eyes examined. The boy needed and was fitted with corrective lenses.

This coach "served" the child through the Little League program of recreation, physical skill development and learning to play with others. He advocated for the child by noticing something about the child that didn't seem quite right, checking on it, and following through to get the glasses.

Many of us have neighbors who keep a watchful eye on our children when they are in their yards, and who call us if our child gets into a bad situation. The child's teacher may note something we need to know about a situation our child is in, and informs us. The 4-H club leader, scout leader or Little League baseball coach have a chance to know our child in a special way and are in a position to not only serve our child through the program they provide, but also to advocate for him.

How to Decide if You Need this Handbook

Things are going well for many children and their parents because there is a good interplay between service and advocacy. *You do not need this handbook, if this is true for you and your child.* You do not need to read further if you are certain your child is getting the things he needs to grow and develop properly.

This handbook is for you only if you are NOT certain about the "services" your child is getting or if you are sure he is NOT getting what he needs. Do not feel alone if either situation applies to you. It is becoming more and more typical to be faced with either possibility.

Two Different Ways to Use the Handbook

1. If you are not completely certain about the different "services" your child is getting, this handbook is especially designed for you. It provides you with a way to identify different situations in which your child gets "service" of some kind. It explains how you can get information about them. It can help you make a decision about whether the situation is good or bad. And it shows you how to develop a plan for getting changes made if they are needed.

   The handbook doesn't tell you everything you can do or need to do in particular situations. It does not tell you exactly what should be present in every situation, but it provides a method you can use to find out. It describes a highly structured process you can use to check on all situations your child is in.

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2. If you are certain your child is NOT getting needed "services," you may be concerned about one particular "service" or about a certain group of "services." For example: The city recreation department isn't providing a good program for your child, or at school your child has the misfortune to get a teacher who doesn't seem to be able to help him learn, or your child needs special help in some way and you're not sure he's getting what he needs.

   If this is true you can use the handbook in a different way. Instead of using the entire process, you can take the steps you need for your particular concern. The steps you need should become clear to you as you go through the handbook.

Suggestions about How to Use the Handbook

This handbook is like a cookbook. The first thing you do in preparing a dish you have never prepared is to glance through the whole recipe to get a general idea of what it is about, and make sure you have all the ingredients you need. Then you go through the recipe step-by-step.

That's what we suggest. Read the handbook all the way through, so you get a general picture of the whole process. Then go through it step-by-step and actually do the things we suggest at each step.

It may not be a good idea to read it all the way through in one sitting. It is loaded with detail because of our attempt to be as complete as possible. Reading through all the detail can be very tiring, so when you feel tired, STOP. Take a break, and come back to it later.

One final suggestion. Just about everybody has had some experience with what we call advocacy. It's a natural function for parents and others who are close to children. Just as some people are more experienced cooks than others, some people are more experienced advocates than others. An experienced cook can read a recipe and change it around. If she already knows how to get a better result, she uses her method.

Do the same thing with this handbook. We have purposely geared the handbook for the less-experienced advocates, to give them a reasonably solid base from which to start.

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IDEAS TO THINK ABOUT

Individual Versus Group Advocacy Effort

You can do many vital things for your child by advocating for him by yourself. The very act of checking on the situations he's in is an advocacy function. It lets the other people who work with him know you care about him and what's happening to him. Usually, someone who knows you're interested in his work with your child will tend to pay more attention to what he does and how he does it.

At times, situations can be so complicated, and have so many things wrong with them you can't change them by yourself. Often what's bad for your child may be bad for many children. When you come across situations where this is true, find out who the parents of the other children are. Get together with them to discuss the situation. See if they are also concerned, and if they are, get them to work with you to try to create change.

Groups of concerned parents and citizens can generate tremendous pressure for change. You don't need a large number of people to do all the work. Most effective groups have about five or six hard-working, strongly committed people. A small number of people can get most of the work done. Use the larger group to show that you have strong backing.

We've seen many situations where this idea worked very well to create significant change for children. For example, about four parents of junior high school children shared concern about two problems. The school building was poorly kept and needed so much repair it actually interfered with the educational program. It also helped to produce a discipline problem, which was the other main concern. The parents set up a meeting by putting a notice in the newspaper. Fifty parents came, and out of this group they got support for their concerns and many ideas.

Only about 20 of the original group actually did any additional work, and only five were involved in major tasks. But they got a quarter million dollars out of what they were told was a tight county school budget to get the school repaired. They also got the school to revise their discipline procedures.

In another example involving the same junior high school, the same methods were used to work with a different group of parents. The school's special reading program was significantly improved. We were able to get two additional reading teachers, plus special materials needed for the program. Three people did the work, but we were supported by 25 mothers. We got help from and were supported by the principal and many teachers at the school. Parents and professionals worked together.

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Acceptance of the Advocacy Function

One task you may be faced with is getting some people to understand and accept the idea of advocacy. Certain people will question your requests for information about the child, or your right to "invade their territory."

Some teachers, not used to other people showing concern about children, may be threatened by requests to observe the child in class or look at the child's school records.

Some physicians, who have learned to assume god-like roles toward patients, will be impatient if you insist on a more complete and understandable medical diagnosis.

Some psychologists, who have limited chances to talk with any but other psychologists, will feel uncomfortable if you ask them to use everyday words when discussing your child.

Every profession has its supply of individuals who want to resist your advocacy efforts. We will discuss reasons for this later. The point is you need to keep in mind that some people will not understand or agree with what you are trying to do.

As a parent advocate you are in a strong legal and socially sanctioned position to perform the advocacy function. It's your responsibility and your right. Keep this in mind and politely remind people who question your right to advocate.

Acting as an advocate for a child if you are not his parent needs more careful consideration. It is important to get approval from the child's parents. Approval from parents will ease the problem of getting others to accept your actions for the child.

Getting approval from parents to assume an advocacy function for their child can be a delicate issue. Most parents realize they are working together with many people to raise their children. They often recognize that other people also act informally as advocates for their child. It may be another thing for some parents to think about a more formal agreement.

Parents receive many messages that they are soley responsible for their child, and that they are not living up to their responsibility. They may view your interest in their child as a threat directed at their competency as parents. Since it is very easy to feel incompetent as a parent, at least sometimes, be sensitive to this possibility.

If they already know and trust you, and see that you have a good relationship with their child, they may be more willing to share their advocacy function with you. This may be especially true if they recognize their own circumstances limit their ability to carry out the function. (If they *are* able to advocate sufficiently for the child, you should reconsider your interests. This is another reason for checking with parents.)

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THE MOTIVE FOR THIS HANDBOOK

You will notice that we have used fairly low-key examples to get across different points. We could have used much stronger examples which would have also indicated the many horrible things that happen to children. But you know about these things either from reading about them or because your child, or a child close to you, is involved in some bad situation. It's no secret that child services are often found wanting. We probably wouldn't have held your attention this far if you weren't aware of the many difficulties in getting needed services for children.

We want to support the notion of advocacy as a natural but important function, necessary to help the child services system work better. Making this natural function more explicit through this handbook helps people think about it more carefully. We want parents and others close to children to think carefully about it, and to agree with us about its importance to the point where they act on it by using the handbook. We have no axe to grind except to help children grow.

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THE ADVOCACY PROCESS

There are three main tasks that must be carried out by a child advocate. They are:

A. Monitoring - actively seeking information about the child and how he experiences the different situations he is in.

B. Assessing - deciding whether a change is needed in any situation the child is in.

C. Advocating - acting to bring about a change needed for the child.

Each of these three tasks contain a number of steps which will be described in the following pages. But first, let's look at the relationship between the three tasks.

Look at Figure 1. It is a flow chart showing how each task is related to the others. Monitoring is the first task. You must first find out what is happening to the child and how he experiences it. Once you collect information, through monitoring, you can assess the situation.

You have only three possible ways to assess the situation.* You may decide that the situation is good for the child. If so, you simply continue monitoring. You may decide that it's a bad situation, in which case you must advocate for the child in some way. Once you successfully complete your advocacy action, you continue monitoring. The third possibility is that you cannot decide if the situation is good or bad. If you are uncertain, one way to clear up your questions is to seek more specific information about the situation. We call this focused monitoring (see page 40, for a fuller description). After you have collected the additional information, you can again try to make a decision about whether or not it's a good situation for the child. If it turns out to be all right for the child, you simply continue monitoring. If not, you advocate. It sounds simple, and it is, in some instances. But later on, we will try to show you how complicated this little three step process can become, and why it is important to keep this picture of the relationship between the three steps in your head.

We need to look at each of the three tasks in more detail. One more point before we do. Look again at the diagram in Figure 1. Do you see a stopping point? No. The starting point is when you begin monitoring. But once you begin, there is no stopping point, unless you quit being an advocate. Taken together, the three main tasks of monitoring, assessing, and advocating should be systematic and continuous. The fact that there is no stopping point in the flow chart represents this.

Now let's take a closer look at each of the three tasks of child advocacy. The first is monitoring.

*It's really not as simple as this. Many situations involve both good and bad circumstances for the child. We'll discuss this further when we get to assessment. First, let's take a simpler view to get the overall relationship between the three tasks.

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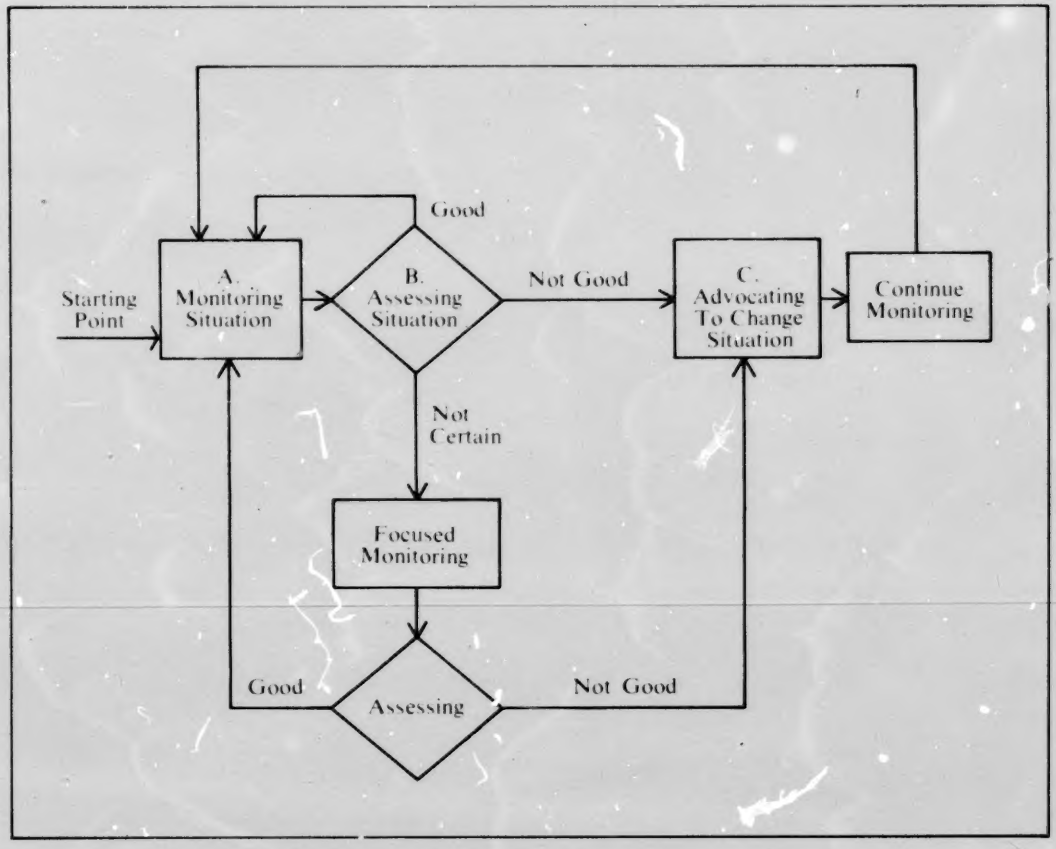

Figure 1. The Advocacy Process

A. Monitoring

Steps in the Monitoring Process

Here are the five basic steps involved in monitoring:

1. Deciding what activities to monitor
2. Deciding what places to monitor
3. Deciding what to look for in each situation
4. Deciding how to collect the information
5. Collecting the information

We will discuss the first three steps, separately. Then we will combine them.

1. DECIDING WHAT ACTIVITIES TO MONITOR

The child engages in a wide variety of activities. If you were to list every single activity, the list would be so long it might overwhelm you. So what

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we have done is to simplify this task by grouping all child activities into six very general categories: 1) Eating, 2) Learning, 3) Sleeping and Resting, 4) Playing and Recreation, 5) Personal Cleanliness, and 6) Working. We have added 7) Other, which you may want to use if some activity the child engages in does seem to fit any of the other six.

There is a certain amount of overlap between these six categories. In 5) Personal Cleanliness, for example, we include everything from washing hands to going to the toilet. If the child is washing his bicycle, we'd probably put that in 4) Playing (or in 6) Working, if his mother made him do it).* Probably the broadest is 2) Learning. We include both informal and formal learning activities in this category. We also include therapy sessions with a mental health worker in learning, since the child is learning about himself and his relationships with others. Sometimes it's hard to decide which category to use. Thus, if your child is on a Little League baseball team, do you classify the practice sessions under 4) Playing and Recreation or under 2) Learning? Since the activity can really be both, feel free to put it in both categories, or in the one that makes the most sense to you.

You can certainly come up with your own list which may be more useful to you in your specific situation. Our list is presented to help you begin to structure your monitoring activity.

2. DECIDING WHAT PLACES TO MONITOR

We divide the child's world into four different areas.

The four areas are:

A. Home
B. School
C. Neighborhood
D. Community (outside the neighborhood)

Obviously, if your child isn't old enough to attend school, you won't include this area until he does. If the child does attend some kind of preschool program that provides planned learning experiences, we would call that his school.

By neighborhood, we mean the geographic area fairly close to the child's home. It includes many different places. Neighbors' homes and yards, a playground, a grocery store, streets, and vacant lots are some of the places in a neighborhood.

By community we mean any place the child spends time that is different from the home, school, and neighborhood. For example, if the child must be transported by automobile to a playground, we would not include that playground in his neighborhood, but in the larger community. If he goes to a weekly session at the mental health clinic across town, takes violin lessons at a music store in the shopping center, or goes to 4-H meetings at places he can't walk to, we'd locate those places in the community rather than in the home, school or neighborhood.

If you're not sure how to categorize a particular place, do what makes most sense to you. These four areas are used merely to help divide the child's world so that it is easier to handle.

*It could also be considered 2) Learning, if his mother made him do it *because* she was trying to teach him to take care of his belongings.

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3. DECIDING WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN EACH SITUATION

We define a situation as a combination of a place, one or more of the child's activities, and *the other important circumstances present while the child is there*. A child working on an arithmetic problem in his classroom may be influenced by important circumstances like how the teacher treats him, the temperature in the room, how long he has been sitting, the distraction caused by classroom noise, or things outside the window more attractive to him than arithmetic. The list can be infinitely long because circumstances can change from moment to moment. The point is that a situation includes a place, child activity, and other important circumstances.

Deciding what to look for in each situation is one of the more difficult parts of the monitoring task. It's fairly easy to list places and activities. It's another thing to take the place, the activity, and all the circumstances, and decide what will be the focus of your monitoring.

Here is a general framework to use for any unfamiliar situation:

General Framework for Thinking about What to Look For

Pay attention to your child. What is he doing? How does he respond? What is his mood? Is he fully engaged or not paying attention? Is he excited or bored? Does he feel comfortable or not? Is he happy, sad, dejected, elated? In short: How does he seem to feel about the situation he is in?

Pay attention to the total situation. Look at everything from the objects in use to the social relationships involved. What does the general atmosphere feel like? Is is cold or warm, physically? Is it cold or warm, humanly? Can you list the circumstances that are affecting your child?

Keep these questions in mind: Is this situation providing an experience for the child that is good or bad for him? What should be happening? What should not be happening? What is the desired effect of the situation on the child? Given the circumstances, will it have a chance to occur? What will tell me whether the situation is working as it should?

Now that we have suggested to you that deciding what to look for in a situation can be complicated, let us quickly add that all situations are not complex. Unfortunately, it is frequently the situations most important to the child's growth that are most complex. We don't want to mislead you into taking a surface look where a deep look is necessary.

Think again about the child working on his arithmetic. His name is Sam. The activity is learning arithmetic. The place is at his desk in the classroom. The teacher has just finished describing to the whole class how to add fractions with different denominators. Now everybody is supposed to do examples 1-21 on page 55 in the arithmetic book. The teacher moves around the room, helping students she knows will need help and those that raise their hands to tell her they need help.

Now let's ask some questions that reflect some of the circumstances that might be part of this situation for Sam.

1. Does Sam understand the teacher's description well enough to know how to do the examples?

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2. If not, can he figure it out from the book?
3. If not, does the teacher know he won't understand, and come to help him? Does she have time to work with all students who need individual help?
4. If not, will he raise his hand?
5. If not, why not? Is he afraid of her? Does he know he won't understand even if she explains it again?
6. Does he like arithmetic? (Who likes fractions, anyway?)
7. If not, will he try to do it anyway, or think about something else?
8. What other things in the room compete with fractions for his attention?
9. Is he comfortable in his seat? How long has he been sitting there?
10. Is he hungry because he didn't eat enough breakfast?
11. Is he too tired to be able to work?
12. Is the room too hot or cold?

It may be hard to get answers to these kinds of questions. But the point is all of the circumstances reflected in them (and many more) determine whether Sam learns fractions. If enough negative circumstances are present in enough arithmetic learning situations, Sam won't learn arithmetic. He will learn some things, but they may not be what he needs to learn. He may learn to hate arithmetic, and that will add another negative circumstance to later learning situations.

Every child situation is not complicated. But we did want to give you an example of one that can be.

We will give you more information about what to look for in different situations in the next section, where we will combine steps 1, 2, and 3.

Steps 1, 2, and 3 Combined

Now that we have described the way we think about activities, places, circumstances and situations, we will present in more specific detail a way to begin monitoring. WORKSHEET 1 is provided to help you. Before you begin monitoring, you can fill out one worksheet for each area: Home, School, Neighborhood, Community.

You can use the worksheet to put down what you know about the child's activities, the places where he does them, the circumstances involved, and some ideas you have about what you want to check on. Notice the other columns on the worksheet. The first column on the left is there so that you can check any situation you want to monitor. In the second column, you note the date you actually monitored the situation. These two columns can be used to help you keep track of your monitoring activities.

The last column on the right is used to record the name of the person who is responsible for the situation. By responsible, we mean the person in charge, the person who is held accountable for the situation. This is very important information to have, both for giving praise for a good situation (adults need positive reinforcement for their good efforts), and so you know who to check with if the situation is not good for your child.

Sometimes it is very easy to identify the accountable person. Sometimes no one is accountable. But you will come across situations

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where it is very hard to find out. We have seen situations in schools, which involved teachers, teacher aides, resource specialists and the school principal, where no one was accountable, even though each in the situation thought it was someone else. It is hard to advocate for your child if you can't find the accountable person.

Since you are just about to begin monitoring, and you are going to fill out the WORKSHEET to get you started, you may not have the names yet. The column labeled: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? will help you remember to get this information.

Before you begin to fill out a WORKSHEET for each area you may want to look at WORKSHEET 1, Example A. This worksheet was filled out by the advocate for George Forbes before he actually went to school. George is in the fourth grade. His advocate had been together with George for several years, but he had not yet observed George in school this year.

As you look over the worksheet you will notice that in 1) Eating, George's advocate shows some concern about the way George eats at school. This is mainly because he knows George is a finicky eater. The advocate has a general concern about good nutrition, so he is going to check out the kitchen, the quality of food they serve and how it's prepared. Since George is a finicky eater, the advocate suspects George may not eat all his lunch. If it is true, he wonders how this may affect George's energy level. Low energy will certainly influence George's ability to pay attention in learning situations after lunch.

Georges' total learning situation needs to be carefully monitored. The advocate hasn't checked it out this year and he knows, from George and his mother, that George is getting extra help in reading. George seems to be a fairly alert child around the home and neighborhood. But the advocate knows it is important to see how George gets along in classroom learning situations. He especially wants to check on his progress in reading. He knows he can get much of this information from George's teachers. But he also knows he needs to get a feel for how George responds to classroom learning situations and what circumstances are present. So he wants to spend some time sitting in the back of the room, just observing.

The advocate also shows a concern in 4) Playing. George is acutely and chronically allergic to poison ivy. In fact, his eyes have have been swollen shut twice so far this year, and no one is sure where he comes in contact with the ivy. George's advocate also wants to check out the general safety situation at the playground, since he hasn't been there yet this year.

Now back to your own WORKSHEETS. Begin to fill out one for the school. In some ways, it is the easiest. Even if you've never been to your child's school, you have a general picture of what goes on there. You spent a fair amount of time in school yourself. Think about what you know about your child in each activity, the different places for the activity, and about the other circumstances present while your child is there.

If you have never been to your child's school, what has your child told you about it? Here is a list of questions to help you:

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1. Does the child look forward to going to school?
2. What kind of mood is the child in after school?
3. Does the child talk about the teacher? What clues can you get from what is said? Does the child like and respect her?
4. What does the child say about experiences at school?

You have to think about the answers to these questions with respect to your particular child. You may get no clues at all from some children. You also have to be careful about how you answer some of the questions based on the information you have. We know a child in second grade who came home from school angry four out of five days a week. His mother was very concerned about what was going on. A check with his teacher suggested that he not only seemed to be enjoying school, but he always seemed to leave in a good mood. An advocate, following him from school to home several times, and checking with the child, discovered that he actually did like school, but once he got outside and saw what a beautiful day it was, he got mad because of all the play time he'd missed. This example may seem farfetched, but it actually did happen. It should warn you not to jump to conclusions before you have enough information.

Here is another list of questions that will help you think about the kinds of things you may want to check at school.

1. Is the child actually learning the skills he needs?
2. Does he get individual attention from the teacher?
3. Does he receive special assistance and support from the teacher when he needs it?
4. Does the teacher have *and use* the skills needed to help the child learn?
5. If the child needs special help, and the teacher cannot provide it, what kind of extra resources (people and materials) are present to get help to the child?
6. What kind of materials are available to the child to help him learn?
7. Do the child and teacher have a good relationship?
8. Does the child have some good friends in the classroom?
9. Do the methods used to discipline the child comply with the law or school policy?
10. Is the room and its furnishings pleasant, comfortable, safe, reasonably well kept?

These questions focus mainly on the learning situation in the classroom. They may make you think of other questions. By drawing up lists of questions for different situations you can structure your monitoring activity in a purposeful way.

Before you begin to monitor a situation you are unfamiliar with, a good list of specific questions will help you to be more systematic in gathering information. By structuring your monitoring activity this way, you also prepare yourself for people who ask you difficult questions like: "Why are you here?" If you can't answer, they may do more than look at you strangely. They may not let you in to find out.

There may be situations with which you have no experience to help you structure your monitoring activity before you get there. Here are two suggestions for this possibility. First, keep in mind the *General*

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Framework For Thinking About What to Look For listed on page 10, and explore the situation. *Let the situation tell you what you need to know.* Be careful about reaching solid conclusions about it until you are quite familiar with it. Second, you can use extra resources to find out more about the situation.

Using Extra Resources - Extra resources come in at least two basic forms: reading materials and people who have directly studied the situation you're interested in. People who have formally studied in a particular area and have some credentials that say so are sometimes referred to as "experts" or "specialists." You don't always need to talk with an expert. Depending on the situation, there may be many other people within easy reach who have the information you need. Another thing to consider is that some experts can't put the information you need in words that make sense to you. Don't blame the expert just because he uses a way of talking you don't understand. It's part of his training that he may not be able to overcome unless you help him. Ask him to repeat what he says in everyday language. If he can, you get the information you want. If he can't, either figure out other ways to ask the questions, or thank him and leave to look for someone who can.

Let's take an example to highlight the use of extra resources. Say you are interested in the same situation George's advocate is: the nutritional quality of food served at the school cafeteria. But you feel you don't know enough about nutrition to be able to ask the right questions when you go there. Here are some ways to learn about this situation:

1. *Go to the card catalog at the library* and look up book titles under the headings nutrition and dietetics. Try to find some nontechnical books on the essentials of good nutrition. You may even find a good book used in courses to train dieticians who work in school cafeterias. As you read these materials you will begin to pick up information that will help you know what to look for in the school kitchen. Write it down. It will help you remember it, as well as give you something to refer to if you forget.
2. *Visit your local public health center or local agricultural extension office.* Both agencies usually have some kind of nutritional program. If the agencies in your area are too small to have a nutrition specialist on the staff, they can refer you to the closest office that does. We found that specialists who work in either agency not only have a lot of information for you, they love to talk about their speciality. They usually have a lot of free pamphlets to give you about the topic. And they can suggest some good books to read.

You can become very knowledgeable about many different situations by using these two kinds of resources. There are specialists in recreation, playground design, building inspection (for safety and fire regulations), child psychology, health and medicine, social services, home economics, environmental protection, law, administration, management, education and child development. In most of these areas there are specialists within specialities.

If you can't find the one you want in a public agency, try the phone directory. If a local newspaper or radio station has an "action line", try that. It may also be possible to find a resource at a college.

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There are two added benefits to using these kinds of extra resources. One is that the more you try to find and use extra resources, the more you come to know about the other community resources potentially available to your child. The other is you will have the chance to learn something new about many different things, and that will enrich your life!

Do not hesitate to ask for help when you need it to do a good job for your child. Just one word of caution: Never completely turn over the task of deciding what you will check on to anyone, no matter how "expert" the person seems to be. Instead, consider what the resource book or person says in light of your own experience, your own values, and your own common sense. Do not make the mistake of acting as if you know everything or as if you know nothing.

Brief Review and Summary

Before we go to the next step, let's summarize in capsule form where we are.

1. Before you begin monitoring - fill out one worksheet for each of the four general areas: Home, School, Neighborhood, and Community.
2. For each situation you want to check, write down a list of questions you have about it. If there is room on the worksheet, put them down in column 5. (You can use column 4, too.) If you need more room, use another sheet of paper or put them on the back of the worksheet.
3. After you complete 1 and 2, look over the situations you want to monitor. Do you need to use extra resources before you monitor them? If so, make a note of these, and look for the resources you need.

4. DECIDING HOW TO COLLECT THE INFORMATION

You have filled out the worksheets for each area: home, school, neighborhood, community. You have noted certain situations you want to check, and you have questions you want to ask about each one.

Once you decide what you want to know, your next step is to consider how to find out. How you find out depends quite a bit on what you want to know. But there are certain other things you should think about at this point. Here are three:

a. Different methods to get the information
b. Scheduling the collection of information
c. Keeping track of the information collected

We'll try to discuss each one in enough detail to give you some important ideas to think about.

a. Different Methods to get the Information

1) Directly observing the situation yourself.
2) Asking the child.
3) Asking someone who is part of the situation.
4) Asking another person to directly observe the situation and report to you.
5) Getting formal reports about the situation.

Some situations may call for using only one method. Others may require a combination of different methods. *Keep in mind that the most important purpose for collecting any information is to help you make a decision about*

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whether or not a situation is good for your child. You should try to select methods that give you correct, reasonably complete information in the shortest possible time. Unfortunately, correctness, completeness and "shortness" do not always fit well together.

There are some things that you will never be able to collect complete information about. Take learning as one example. We believe that children (and adults, too) have a chance to learn in every situation they are in. Learning occurs in many different ways. Sometimes the learning can be directly observed, but sometimes it cannot. When it cannot be directly observed, it is sometimes possible to find out by indirect methods that learning has taken place. Sometimes you cannot know your child has learned something until months after he has learned it.

Because learning is a continuous process, because it has a chance to occur in so many situations, and because it is frequently hard to observe, we know you will not be able to get *complete* information about it. You can get *reasonably complete* information about most of the important learning situations your child is in. Be satisfied with that and use it to recognize the importance of being systematic and continuous in your monitoring. Recognize that you must think carefully about what it is you want to find out and how you are going to collect information about it.

You will have a chance to think further about what we mean by correctness, completeness, and "shortness" as you read through the following discussions of the five different methods of collecting information. Before we launch into these discussions, here is a list of questions to keep in mind when thinking about what method to use:

- Will the method help get the type of information needed to assess (make a decision about) the situation?
- Will it help get reasonably complete information? How frequently will it have to be used?
- Will it provide correct information?
- What effect will the method have on the situaiton? Will it change it so much that the information will be changed? Will it interfere with the situation so that what is supposed to happen there won't happen? Will it cause problems for the child?
- Will the method violate anyone's right to privacy?
- Can the method actually be used, or do practical considerations prevent it?
- How much time and energy is needed to use it? How much will it cost?
- Can the method be used to get information about more than one situation at the same time?

1) Directly Observing the Situation Yourself

Being present to watch a situation provides you with some information you can't get any other way. Think about direct observation within the *General Framework for Thinking About What to Look For*, p. 10. Direct observation gives you a chance to personally experience the total situation and to see what circumstances are present. You can watch your child and see how he responds to it. You can think about the effect the situation is having on the child, and whether or not it's good or bad, intended or not intended.

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It has the advantage over other methods in that the information comes directly to you. Information from other more indirect methods always passes through certain "filters." Sometimes this is all right, but sometimes the information gets changed in ways that make it less useful. We will discuss these "filters" when we talk about the other methods. The point is: *Direct observation provides direct information.*

Direct observation requires you to be mentally alert. Don't try to do it when you are extremely tired. Of course, the demand for your attention depends or the situation. Looking for poison ivy around the playground takes less mental alertness than watching your child in a learning situation. There are fewer circumstances involved in looking for poison ivy.

Direct observation requires a fair amount of time. Many situations call for much more than one visit. You can check out the playground for for poison ivy in one visit, but we do not recommend using one visit to school to check out your child's learning situations. We recommend a minimum of from five to 10 visits, scheduled fairly close together, in a two- or three-week period. Then you should make periodic visits scheduled throughout the school year, say at least once a month. The actual number of direct observations you make depends on how quickly you get a good understanding of the situation. If you can tell it's a very good situation in five visits, then you may want to use other methods that take less time to continue monitoring the situation. If you can't make up your mind in five visits, continue direct observation until you can.

Directly observing situations requires you to lay some groundwork. If you want to monitor your child in recreational situations like Little League baseball, Scouting or 4-H, all you have to do is show up at the right time. Most people in charge of these program will welcome your interest. Introduce yourself to them, mention your interest in seeing how your child is doing and what the program is like. Tell them you'd simply like to watch and find yourself a spot where you can watch without interfering. Sometimes you don't even have to introduce yourself. If you want to monitor the swimming pool situation, grab your swim suit and go (but don't forget your Worksheet and list of questions).

You need to use greater care in preparing to directly observe certain situations. Most situations involving some kind of professional worker are included in this group. You may be successful using the same approach you use with the 4-H leader, but don't count on it. It is very important to use the correct "channels" to gain entry. If you make the mistake of not checking with all the necessary people, you may be prevented from getting in to monitor the situation.

One good reason why agencies have regulations preventing outsiders from getting in to observe is to protect the people served by the agency. Probably the most important protection is the client's right to privacy. If your child is receiving psychological help from a mental health worker, you may be interfering with his right to privacy by observing him in that situation. Another good reason is that your presence in the situation may interfere too much with the work going on there.

If you think you may be violating your child's right to privacy, we believe you should not monitor that situation. If you think your presence

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will cause great interference in the situation, look for other means to get information about it.

There are other reasons why agencies set up barriers to keep people from observing their programs. Some of these are not as good as the two we've just mentioned. Sometimes an agency worker will tell you that you can't observe just because the idea is so new to him that it startles him into saying "no." (It can work the other way, too). Some will try to hide behind what they call a "General Policy" not to let anyone in. Some agency workers are so afraid you are looking for something bad (and that you'll find it) they won't let you in. Some agency workers will be unsure of who you are and what you want, and unless you can help them understand, they may say "no."

Many professional workers will not react negatively to you, and your interest in observing situations involving your child. Many of them believe in the importance of letting others know about their service and how they are using it to help the child. They know also that concern on the part of other people can be used to help them help the child.

Keeping these kinds of things in mind should help you think about the best approach to use to get permission to directly observe a situation. The particular approach you take to gain entry to an agency will affect your chance to observe AND influence the outcome of any later advocacy action with the agency.

Start out on a friendly, cooperative basis. Start out by assuming they are in partnership with you in helping your child. Let them know you are strongly concerned and committed to helping your child. Explain that you know the importance of keeping track of how he is doing in his life situations. You therefore want to see him in this particular situation, to find out what it's about, and to see how it fits with the rest of his life. We found the friendly approach to work best even when we had some reason to think that a situation was not good for a child. Since we weren't certain about all circumstances, we approached to get permission as if the situation was generally all right. Operating in a friendly, cooperative manner helps to lay good groundwork for later negotiation if a situation needs to be changed.

Sometimes a more aggressive, demanding approach may be necessary, but keep in mind that typical reactions to this style may be defensiveness, anger, and aggressiveness. It is normal for people to want to defend themselves (and their agency). If you make demands, they may protect themselves by trying to get rid of you, rather than by letting you in to monitor.

We want to go into more detail on one important point about direct observation. We have already referred to it when we said directly observing a situation may interfere with it so much that what is supposed to happen can't take place. It is true that if you are not typically part of a situation, and you go to observe it, your presence does change the situation. You become an added circumstance. Whether your presence changes it *significantly* is another question. *Significant* change simply means the situation is changed so much by your presence you cannot get correct information about what usually happens.

The amount of change that occurs depends upon how you act while you are there. It depends on the kinds of relationships you have with the other

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people there, and how they think about you. It depends upon the kind of activity going on, and the size of the place it's going on in. It also depends on how unusual it is for you to be there, and on how many times you have been there before.

Your first visits to the swimming pool or the Little League baseball game are not likely to cause a significant change. On the other hand, your first visit to the classroom may cause a significant change. Your child may show his best behavior. The teacher may show his, too. Since your presence is new, everyone there will pay some attention to you until the newness goes away. But the more you visit the more you become a usual part of the situation and usually everyone there returns to their usual behaviors.

This is another reason for not jumping to conclusions on the information you get from one visit. On your first and second visit, you may change the situation so much the information you get does not give you a correct picture. After you have been there three or four times, the situation gets closer to normal. This of course makes the information closer to normal.

You need to pay close attention to the effect you have on a situation. You should think about how to approach the situation and how to act while you are there, so you can fit into it as quickly as possible. If you think you are still significantly changing it after several visits, you may have to use other methods to get the information you need.

One final point about direct observation has to do with how long you should observe. The first few visits should be longer than later visits. We suggest you spend at least an hour (two if you have the time) on your first visits to places like the classroom. This amount of time helps you to get a better feel for the total situation and all the different circumstances present. It also helps your "newness" to wear off more quickly. Once you have become more a part of the situation, reduce your direct observation to 20 or 30 minutes. Paying close attention longer than 30 minutes is very hard work. The only time we suggest staying longer is if you see something developing you want to collect information about. If you can, schedule your visits at different times during the school day. Go in the morning some days, the afternoon on other days. This will help you get a good sample of the total school day without spending a whole day there.

2) Asking the Child

We mean two different things when we say "asking the child." The first is simply asking the child a direct question about the situation and listening to what he says.

The second is more indirect. It involves having a general conversation with the child during which you start asking him general questions about the situation you are interested in. By getting him to talk about a situation in a general way, you have a chance to hear from him what he thinks is important about that situation in a general way, you have a chance to hear from him what he thinks is important about that situation. *By paying attention to what he says, how he says it, and how he acts while he's talking about it, you can tell something about how he feels about the situation.*

Children will tell you a great deal if you listen. Striking up a pleasant general conversation with children and letting them take the lead to talk about

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whatever they want to is very good experience for them. It can be a fascinating experience for you to see what goes on in a child's mind.

We were transporting five children to the playground one day. It was late in the summer, so we playfully said: "Well, I suppose you're all anxious to get back to school!" After the usual "hate" statements about school, they launched into a long discussion among themselves about their school, what they liked about it, what they didn't like about it, and about the teachers they would have. The talk about the teachers was amazing. Children who had had a teacher before were telling children who would have her next year about what kind of a teacher she was, what you could get away with and how you could get away with it, what she did in the classroom that was fun, or not fun. We got information about how five kids felt about seven different teachers (they had other teachers pegged, too); about how they felt about learning; about what kind of place the school was to those kids. We asked just that first simple question to get some very important information.

We do not recommend you accept everything a child says as absolute truth. (In fact, we don't recommend you do this with *most* information.) But the way a child sees a situation and feels about it is truth to him. *Having* access to his views and feelings is extremely important. *You can not advocate for your child as well if you don't have this information.* How a child sees and feels about a situation helps you know if the situation is a good one for your particular child. Without this knowledge you have only your own views and feelings to use to judge it, and many times that is *not* enough.

Consider these two examples:

Advocate visits baseball field to observe child at practice. Coach is constantly yelling at the kids all during practice, pointing out mistakes, acting angry, making kids work very hard. Coach singles out advocate's child three times and yells at him about not approaching the ball right. Child has a hang-dog look, but keeps trying harder. *Advocate's view:* This is a bad situation for my child. The coach is mean, seems to dislike kids, and pushes them too hard. *Advocate checks later with child:* "Boy, that coach certainly yells a lot at you and everybody else!" Response: "What? Oh Yeah. He does that a lot in practice. You should see him at the games. Cool as a cucumber. Man, he is GOOD! I'm learning more about how to play second base from him than anybody before! And boy, I think we're going to win the league this year. He's a great coach!" And on and on about this play and that play and that player or this one, saying it all with a feeling that's one of excitement about the whole situation, indicating strongly that the yelling of the coach did not bother him like it bothered the advocate.

Advocate is monitoring TV program watched by child (age 4). Program is live nursery-school-type program with an adult setting up play activities and learning situations for the children on the program and the children at home. Advocate has watched the program three times now. He has some definite feelings about the show, and especially the adult "teacher": The show is boring, the activities are dumb, the teacher talks down to the children. She's got this prissy way of talking that makes her seem phony. He turns to tell the child she shouldn't watch this program. He says, "Nancy, this program is not good for you." No response. He repeats it. Still no response. Then he begins to pay attention to her. She is (as they say) glued to the tube. She is so interested in the program she didn't hear what he said to her. (Kids can do that.) What does she see in this boring program!? By paying careful attention to Nancy and what she was paying attention to in the program, the advocate observed

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the following things. Nancy sat still sometimes and moved around sometimes. She didn't seem to be watching it every minute, but when something caught her eye, she looked like nothing could tear her away. The something was usually either a cartoon drawing, drawings by the kids on the show, other objects, toys or fish in the fish-tank, or the kids, themselves. She would not only watch them, she would try to do what they were doing, and she would move with music whenever it was played. And whenever the "teacher" talked too long she stopped paying attention. Nancy's way of acting, the expression on her face, the way she seemed to be paying close attention told the advocate that Nancy really liked most of the show, that she kind of agreed with him about the teacher, but that it wasn't as important to her as it was to him. Nancy didn't say a single word, but she told the advocate a great deal.

We have tried to show the importance of checking with the child through these examples. We are *not* suggesting by them that just because a child likes a situation it is good for him (or the reverse). We don't believe in letting children play with firecrackers, even though they may profess undying excitement about playing with them. The point is that knowing your child's views and feelings are crucial to your understanding of the situations he is in. You need to put the child's views and feelings about situations alongside yours. You need the child's views and feelings to check on how correct and complete all your other information is.

There is a very important additional benefit that comes with asking the child. By getting to know how he thinks and feels about the different situations he is in, you will get to know him in a much deeper way. You will be able to use this information as you think about new situations he is faced with.

One note of caution: Be careful you don't violate your child's right to privacy. It may be more correct to say: Be careful not to violate what your child thinks is his right to privacy. Chances are, if he thinks you're asking too many questions, he'll clam up and not tell you anything, or he'll be very careful about the information he gives you. It becomes more important as the child gets older, especially in teen years. If your child thinks you're invading his privacy too much, he may stop telling you how he thinks and feels about situations. Then you have lost a vital source of information.

3) Asking Someone Who is Part of the Situation

This is the usual way most parents, acting as advocates, collect information about how their child is doing in different situations, expecially learning situations in school. Much important information can be collected from teachers, teacher aides, guidance counselors, principals, scout or 4-H leaders, recreation directors, social workers, and others who work with or have some kind of responsibility for situations your child is in.

Many parents are not as careful or as systematic as they could be when using this method. If you ask nothing more than the general question: "Well, how is Alice doing in school?" you should expect nothing more than a general response, "Oh, she's doing fine." You may get more than that, but asking one general question leaves the teacher in the position of thinking you only want general information. It gives her almost complete control over what information she chooses to give you.

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But if you ask: "How is Alice doing in each of her subject areas?" and then ask even more specific questions based not only what the teacher says, but also on questions you have from checking with Alice, or from direct observation, you have more control over the information you get. The more specific your questions are, the more you control the information. After you get the information you want, you can always ask a general question to allow the teacher to give you additional information on things you haven't thought about.

Most good teachers will respect you for asking careful questions about how your child is doing in school, and about the different situations she is in. Teachers who enjoy teaching like to talk about their work with your child. They like to find parent-advocates who are concerned enough about the child to ask. This is true of all other people who work with children, whether they are paid professionals or volunteer soccer coaches. Many of them don't see enough parents who are interested in their children. Because of this they frequently assume that parents don't care.

There are some other things to keep in mind when using this method. It is usually best to set up an appointment to talk with professionals working with your child. Call them on the phone, tell them briefly why you want to meet with them, how long you want to meet with them, and arrange a time that is convenient for both of you. If you just drop in without notice, you may catch them at a time when they are too busy to talk to you. Interrupting their work is not the best way to form a good working relationship with someone you need information from. They cannot concentrate on answering your questions. This means the information may not be as correct or complete as it would be if you meet them at a time when they know the purpose of the time period is to answer your questions.

The idea of advocacy raises suspicion with many people. The idea that you want to check on a situation your child is in that someone else is responsible for may cause the person to wonder about what you're really after. Since your present purpose is only to collect information, you can afford to use the friendly, cooperative, but interested and concerned approach to help the person feel at ease.

It is very important to check on the information you get from people who are part of the situation. There are two main reasons for this. One is because of the "filters" we mentioned before; the other is because of "vested interests."

Any indirect report about a situation goes through different kinds of filters. Filters reduce the amount of information you get. Any report is a very shortened version of what actually happens. Filters help to make information collection more efficient, and in this sense they serve a useful purpose. If you can get in five minutes correct, complete information about how Susan is doing in English, then you are being more efficient than if you observe the classroom 15 times to get the same information about that question.

But the filtering process may cause you to lose some of the information you need. One kind of filter has to do with the values of the person reporting to you. What a person values causes her to focus her attention in particular ways. If she believes strongly that every child needs to learn how to read, but she doesn't place much value on developing a child's ability to solve problems,

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you may get good information about reading, but not about problem solving. If the Little League coach has a strong value about baseball being a chance for children to learn to play together, get along with each other, and become good sports, but does not value developing a child's baseball skills, you may not be able to get good information about your child's physical coordination from him. He may try to answer your question, but if he never pays attention to physical coordination because he doesn't value it, how good can the information be?

Another kind of filter has to do with a person's training. A farmer, a geologist, and a golf course designer walking through the same field will pay attention to different things. A school nurse, a teacher, and a guidance counselor will pay attention to different things about a child and any particular situation he is in. The information you get will be filtered by the training of the person you get it from.

"*Vested interests*" serve as another kind of filter. A person who has vested interests in a situation has a personal stake in it. They have an investment in it because they feel responsible for it. The principal has a vested interest in the whole school situation, including all the teachers. She has overall responsibility for everything going on in the school. The janitor has a vested interest in the classroom in that it is his job to keep it clean (and if he can convince the teacher and pupils it's *their* responsibility, *too*, he will, because he has a vested interest in making his job easier).

The teacher has a vested interest in all classroom situations. She has almost total responsibility for everything in the room. She feels a very important kind of ownership for what goes on there. How she acts, thinks and feels in the classroom is part of the situation. Her skills and abilities are part of the situation. It is her work.

It is a natural human tendency for people to protect their investments. You have vested interests in your child, your home and other situations you have some control over. The other people who work with your child do too. When they give you information about a situation that is supposed to be under their control, keep this notion of vested interests in mind.

The information you collect from people who are part of the situation is important information. It may be the shortest method of getting information. But since it is subject to different filters, it may not always be complete. It may be helpful to remember these things: You can affect the filters in a way that helps you by being clear about the questions you ask, and by not expecting people to answer questions they can't answer. You should always try to use other methods to check on the completeness of information you get from a person who is part of the situation.

4) Asking Another Person to Monitor a Situation

This method is not used as much as it could be by parents. It's another example of how our society has trained us as parents to rely only on ourselves to raise and protect our children. If we can't check on the circumstances children are involved in, ourselves, nobody else does either. This can be a foolhardy way to raise children.

Suppose you and your spouse work. Neither of you are able to see the teacher or directly observe the school situation the child is in. It may be that

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you have a good friend who doesn't work who would be willing and able to check on situations for you. Why not ask her to monitor certain situations for you? Here is a chance for you to begin to train another person in the "art of advocacy." Let your friend read this manual, especially the parts of it that relate to what you are asking her to do. If you're successful in getting your friend interested, you will not only get another resource to help your child, you may also be providing your friend with an experience that could enrich *her* life.

There are other ways to think about this particular method. *One is to use it together with your own monitoring*. If you and your friend both monitor a situation at different times, you increase your ability to get information. Also, your friend may be able to get information you cannot get. Sometimes people who have a "vested interest" in a situation will open up to a friend of a parent in different ways than they will with the parent. Also, in direct observation, sometimes the friend will not change the situation as much as the parent would. (Especially in a classroom situation, where both the child and the teacher may react in very different ways to the parent's presence.)

If you use this method, *make sure the person clearly understands the questions and knows how to get the information for you*, including how to make the necessary arrangements to visit the place. You will probably need to lay some groundwork, yourself, for some situations. As you can imagine, this would be important to do where professional workers are involved. You have to let them know that your friend is acting at your request. Otherwise, they may not let her in because of their desire to protect the child's privacy and your rights as parent.

Obviously, this can take you some time to set up, but once the groundwork is laid, you have an added source of information. Think of it as a way to develop a special kind of "extended family" for your child and yourself.

Another possibility is to *get someone who is more knowledgeable than you to check on some situation you're not sure about*. Suppose you're concerned about whether a building your child spends time in is safe. You've been there and have some questions about it. Say you decide you don't have the time or the desire to learn about fire and safety regulations, and building codes. Instead of using extra resources to learn these things yourself, you may be able to get the "expert" to monitor the situation for you and report to you. A better way, if you do have the time, is to go through the building with the inspector. This gives you a chance to ask your questions at the site, providing more direct information than would come in a verbal or written report. (It also helps you to learn more about safety and fire regulations for use in other situations.)

This method requires careful planning by you both in selecting the people you use and in telling them clearly what you want to know. Remember, information obtained from others is indirect and passes through filters. It is reliable only to the extent you can control it by being systematic.

5) Getting "Formal" Reports About the Situation

Another source of information available to you is through formal reports. These may include medical or dental reports from health examinations, eye tests, hearing tests, or any other special medical tests. It includes report cards,

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achievement test scores, intelligence test scores and reports from any special educational tests that were made. It includes treatment plans for any special service your child is receiving.

Professional evaluation reports on the school or other child service agency about programs and personnel may be available. Reports like these may be very general, but they can give you some information about other circumstances affecting the situations you are monitoring. The school budget is a good source of information about how the county commissioners, school board, central administration and the principals feel about spending money for education. Suppose you notice the school band or football team gets a very fat slice of the total budget, especially when compared to money spent for remedial reading. This may be an important circumstance for you, if your child needs remedical reading and isn't getting it.

Most public agencies and institutions set up to serve your child have some sort of policy handbook or written regulations on what they are supposed to do and how they are supposed to do it. They can provide you with much *general* information about the particular agency. Handbooks on agency policies, regulations and practices tell you (sometimes) what is supposed to happen. Your monitoring will tell you what is actually happening.

Let's look again at some of the other reports closer to your child. Report cards are very short reports on what the teacher thinks about your child's progress in learning for a six- to eight-week period. There are filters operating here. A report card gives a very rough idea about your child in learning situations. You always need more information than it can give you.

Achievement and Intelligence Tests

Achievement test scores usually (but not always) give some idea about your child's grade level. If your child scores 5.6 in arithmetic achievement, and he took the test in the fifth grade, two months after school started, the score shows he is about where he should be in learning the kind of arithmetic that was on the achievement test. If the score is in some other form, ask the teacher to tell you what it means, or to give it to you in terms of the grade he is in. Some teachers can't do this for you. One teacher we know told us an achievement test score of 90 was the child's intelligence quotient. What the score really meant was that the child was achieving at a level higher than 90 percent of the children taking the test. If the teacher can't tell you what the scores mean, check with the guidance counselor. She usually has the training to help her interpret the scores to you.

Intelligence test scores are supposed to tell you something about your child's ability to learn, or his potential for learning new things. An intelligence test score (I.Q.) of 100 is thought to show average intelligence. I.Q. scores usually can range from near zero (for children who have severely damaged brains) to around 190. Anywhere from 90 to 110 I.Q. is considered in the average range.

Do not rely too heavily on scores from one achievement test or one intelligence test, especially if they are group tests (meaning all the kids in the room took them at the same time). They are only very rough estimates of what they are supposed to measure. Children taking them can be affected by many circumstances. They may not feel like paying attention to the test that day, or they could just be having a very bad day.

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You can rely more on a pattern of test scores. If the child gets achievement test scores at the 2nd grade level when he's in second grade, scores at the 3rd grade level when he's in the third grade, and scores at the 4th grade level in fourth grade, you can see that he's making reasonable progress. If he scores at the 2nd grade level when he takes the test again in the fifth grade, he should be retested. Something may be wrong, but you don't know whether the problem lies in the testing situation, the learning situation, or the child.

The pattern is different with I.Q. scores. The scores should be roughly the same from test to test. But they can change as much as 20 points and still be roughly the same. One score may be 90, another score may be 110. Both are still an indication of average intelligence. Usually scores won't change that much from one test to another. But if the test is a group test, remember that the testing situation can affect the child's performance on the test.

We could give you much more information about these tests, but it probably will be easier for you to use extra resources when you have further questions about tests. Just remember that test scores serve only as general indicators about a child's situation. They are not permanent, absolute truth about a child.

There is one other kind of formal report we want to tell you about. *If your child is thought to need some kind of special help*, in school, in a mental health clinic, or some other kind of special service program, *always look for the treatment plan report*. The treatment plan report should include: 1) a description of why the child needs the special service or program; 2) what the program or service is to be; and 3) some estimate of time the child will be in the program. A good treatment plan usually goes into a fair amount of detail about the child and his situation. It lists results of special testing, usually done by a psychologist or some type of specialist. It shows how the results of testing or other information about the child lead to specific kinds of treatment. It should show the particular objectives of the treatment in terms of how the child will be helped.

You may not always find one, because many agencies still do not routinely write treatment plans for their clients. If you find there is no written treatment plan, it means either the plan is in somebody's head, or there is no treatment plan. We believe either situation is very risky for the child. It is hard to hold people accountable for service if they keep a plan for treatment to themselves. If there is no treatment plan, it can mean the people providing a service don't know why the child is there, or exactly what they are supposed to do with him. We are very serious about this. You would be amazed at how many children are referred to special education programs, either in their school or in some other institution, for whom no treatment plan has been made. If your child ever gets into this kind of situation you will most certainly have to advocate for him.

Treatment plans are future oriented. They tell what should be happening in the days that will come. Many formal reports about child situations tell about what has already happened. Report cards are like this. Reports describing what has already happened are only useful if they can give you information to help you understand the present situation or help you change a situation that needs changing. Once the report card comes out, you can't do

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anything about the last six weeks, but you may be able to do something about the next six weeks.

Summary and Review

We have tried to give you enough information about these five different methods to give you ideas about how to use them and when to use them. Keep in mind that the quickest may not always be best when you need correctness and completeness. Generally, the more complicated a child situation is, the more you will use a combination of these methods. As you get more experienced in monitoring, you will discover ways to get correct, reasonably complete information in shorter ways.

Now it's time to turn your attention back to WORKSHEET 1. We assume you have one of the worksheets filled out for each area: Home, School, Neighborhood, and Community. You have a list of situations you want to check in each area. You have been thinking about the five different methods you could use to collect information about these situations.

It is usually easier to think about which methods to use at the same time you are scheduling your monitoring activities. This is especially true if you are just beginning to monitor and you have many situations in each area to monitor.

b. Scheduling the Collection of Information

If you are going to be systematic about monitoring, you need to pay attention to a number of things. You should try to:

Make sure you lay all necessary groundwork, especially at the beginning of monitoring in each area.

Get an overall view on all the situations you want to monitor in each area. This will help you think about where to start when you set up your schedule.

Think carefully about how much time you actually have for monitoring. If you're like most people, you won't have unlimited time, and you'll have to make decisions about which situations are most important to monitor and which ones you can put off until later.

Think carefully about the methods you want to use in your monitoring.

We have prepared some worksheets to help you keep these points in mind. As you read through this next section, you may get the impression that we have made what you thought was an easy task seem very complicated. If you don't have several situations to check in all four areas, you may not need to use the entire process we are going to describe. Read the following for ideas, and take what you need to develop a simpler process.

1) Decide What Situations You Want to Monitor First

Look over your worksheets for each of the four areas.
Think about which situations in each area you know most about and which you know least about. Which ones do you need to monitor first and which ones do you think you can put off until later?

Now look at WORKSHEET 2. It has a column for each area. Use it to list all situations in each area from most important to least important. By most important we mean: which situations you feel you need to monitor first,

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for whatever reasons you may have. Use key words or short phrases to list the situations rather than writing the whole situation out. This worksheet is only to help you establish your priorities (order of importance of situations to monitor).

At this point you may decide to start with all situations in one area before you monitor any situation in another area. It is more likely that one or two situations in two or three areas are very important. Look at WORKSHEET 2, Examples A & B. Example A shows that the advocate making the list wanted to monitor several situations at the school before she did anything else. Example B shows the other possibility. Here the advocate shows a priority concern for finding out where his child gets into poison ivy. He's going to check different places in all four areas before he monitors any other situation.

NOTE: If you have very little experience with monitoring, you may want to list first some situations you know are not too complicated, just to try out your skills. This way you can test out different methods of collecting information for different situations. You can see how people react to you and the idea of monitoring. You can find out how good you are at asking specific questions. Then you can use your experience to change your approach in later situations. Scouting, 4-H, Sunday School, community playgrounds, and maybe a neighborhood play area are good places to start.

We believe listing situations in order of their importance is a very useful step. It helps you think more carefully about your child and what you know and don't know about the many situations he or she is involved in. It helps you think about all four areas of your child's world at the same time. It can help you determine how well you have been keeping up with your child's involvement in each area.

While the careful thinking you do is important, don't get too bogged down in making decisions about your own priorities. You may come upon two or more situations you think are of equal importance. Since you probably won't be able to monitor two different situations at the same time, make a decision about which to do first. Flip a coin if you have to. Remember it's *your* worksheet to help you structure your monitoring. You can always make changes any time you decide you need to. Once you have completed listing all situations on Worksheet 2, you have completed this step.

2) *Beginning Steps in Scheduling*

There are three parts to this next step:

a) Separating situations into more specific concerns.
b) Considering possible methods to collect information about each concern.
c) Considering scheduling requirements of monitoring each concern.

We will describe what we mean by starting out with an example. Look at WORKSHEET 3, Example, on page 56. The three parts to this step are included in the three columns on the worksheet: Situations to Monitor, Possible Methods, and Scheduling Requirements. Think back to WORKSHEET 1, Example for George Forbes (or look at it again, p. 52). Assume the first situation the advocate wanted to monitor (and therefore listed as situation 1) was George's lunchroom eating situation.

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A review of that situation shows there are really a number of different concerns (or questions) within that situation. They are listed in column 1, as: 1) nutrition; 2) food appealing?; 3) how much does he eat?; and 4) if not much, energy level, p.m.? This is what we mean by a) separating situations into more specific concerns.

Now look at the second column on WORKSHEET 3. Next to each concern listed in column 1, the advocate has noted different methods he may want to use to collect information on each concern.

Now look at the third column on the worksheet. Here, the advocate lists the points he wants to keep in mind as he plans his monitoring schedule.

The worksheet doesn't tell you one part of the process the advocate used. What he did was to first look at the concerns about the situation he had written down on WORKSHEET 1. Next, he wrote down the first concern in column 1 of WORKSHEET 3. Next, he filled out columns 2 and 3 for the first concern. Next, he listed the second concern. He then completed columns 2 and 3 for that concern, before listing the third concern. After he completed all concerns for situation 1, he went on to situation 2) Playground.

There are two reasons for doing it this way. The first is it allows enough room in columns 2 and 3. The second reason is that two or more different concerns within a particular situation frequently require different methods and possibly different scheduling requirements. Looking at each one by itself helps you give it the careful consideration it needs to figure out the best way to monitor it.

Now we'd like you to start on your own WORKSHEET 3. Look at the first situation you listed on WORKSHEET 2. What area is it in? Put a check next to that area (Home, School, Neighborhood, or Community) in the upper right hand corner of WORKSHEET 3.

Note: It's usually easiest to think about scheduling considerations for all situations within a particular area. Therefore you should use one set of WORKSHEETs 3 for the school area, one set for neighborhood, etc.

Next, put down in column 1 the key word or words describing the situation. Then look carefully at how you have described the situation on WORKSHEET 1. How many different questions are you asking about the situation? (Make sure you also use any additional lists of questions you wrote down when filling out WORKSHEET 1.) Write down the key words describing the first concern or question you have.

Next, go to column 2: Write down the method or methods you think you might use to collect information about that particular concern. Keep in mind the discussion of correctness, completeness, and "shortness" of methods.

Next, go to column 3: Think about what you will need to do if you are going to use a particular method. Do you need to lay any groundwork? Make appointments? Use extra resources? If you want to use more than one method, which will you use first? Are there any problems or difficulties in using particular methods you want to use? Will you have any difficulty getting in to monitor? Will the method used change the situation? Do you have to think about filters? What time of day should the method be used? Can you set up the monitoring for that time? Consider these questions, and note down things to keep in mind.

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until you complete the columns for all the concerns you have about a particular situation.

Next, repeat the process for the next situation you have listed on WORKSHEET 2.

NOTE: If the next situation is in the same area as the first, continue on the same WORKSHEET. If it's in a different area, write: GO TO WORKSHEET 3, Area , just below the situation you have completed. Then start a new worksheet 3 for that area. This note to yourself will remind you about the importance of this situation compared to others listed below it, and will be useful in planning your overall schedule of monitoring.

Use this process for every situation you have listed on WORKSHEET 2. Once you complete filling out the three columns on WORKSHEET 3 for each situation, go to the next step.

Suggestion: Say you've filled out WORKSHEET 2 and you have a rather long list of situations, about 20 or so. Say you've also filled out columns 1, 2, and 3 on WORKSHEET 3 for seven or eight situations and you're beginning to get one of two different feelings: 1) this work is getting very tedious, and you're wondering if you'll ever get to the actual monitoring, or 2) you can see from what you've written down so far it's going to take you several weeks just to get the first seven or eight situations monitored.

If either or both feelings come over you, instead of completing WORKSHEET 3 for all situations, STOP! Look at WORKSHEET 2. Can you put off monitoring the remaining situations to a later time? If so, do it! If there are still a few more situations you need to monitor, complete those and then stop. We suggest you take liberties with our process to make it fit your own style and common sense. We want you to be systematic, but we don't want you to follow our methods so rigidly they bog you down.

3) Organizing Your Schedule of Monitoring

Now it's time for you to:

a) Group certain activities together.
b) Make a list of the different tasks to be done.
c) See if there is a natural or logical order for the different tasks.
d) Estimate how much time it will take to do each task.
e) Using your calendar, actually schedule the day or days you will do each task.

Let's go back to WORKSHEET 3, Example A, to tell you what we mean. You will remember that the advocate for George Forbes originally wanted to check three situations at school—but, for the moment, let's assume he only wants to monitor the two listed on WORKSHEET 3: 1) Eating in lunchroom and 2) Playground situation. Let's also assume he has never met the principal, or the teacher, or anyone else at school.

Up to now he has four concerns in the first situation, and two in the second. He has listed different methods to obtain information about each one, and he has noted a number of things he needs to do to set up his monitoring activity and carry it out.

The first thing he does is to look over the worksheet to see if there are things he can group together. He notes he needs to check with the principal about several things. He takes out a blank sheet of paper (it's hard to construct

a worksheet for this step) and writes:

Check with Principal about:

1. Meeting and talking with school dietitian or head cook
2. Lunchroom supervision—who does it? Teacher or someone else?
3. Can I eat lunch at school to observe George?
4. Meeting and talking with phys. ed. person about:
   a. poison ivy
   b. safety of playground equipment

By doing this kind of grouping, George's advocate has a kind of "working agenda," a beginning list of things he wants to talk with the principal about. Writing them down helps the advocate think about the different concerns or questions he has about different situations. It also helps him think about how to get started. It is clear to him that he needs to meet the principal before he can get closer to the situations he wants to monitor. Through her, he can meet the other people he wants to talk with.

But before he reaches for the phone to make an appointment he looks further at WORKSHEET 3. Is there anything else he can group together? He notes that he wants to check with George about the food, but he wants to wait until he has more information about the situation from other methods. He also knows he may not need to ask George if his direct observation of George while eating shows that George eats everything.

He notes he could check with George about the playground situation by going there with him. He remembers he actually can check out the playground for poison ivy and equipment safety by two different methods: going with George or meeting the phys. ed. person. Both questions are fairly simple. There is no need to use both methods. If you were George's advocate which one would you select?

If the school is 20 miles away you might find it more convenient to group this monitoring task with others, rather than make a separate trip. The distance factor makes it sort of unnatural for you to go there with George, anyway. If the school is only 10 minutes away, it is easier for you to say: "Hey George, how about showing me your school playground?" It will give you and him a chance to spend some good time together.

Is there any other reason why you want to talk with the physical education teacher? George's advocate did not list one, but he may very well decide he would like to get more information about the physical education program George is involved in. If he decides this is important, he revises his worksheets by adding this new situation he wants to check. And he also adds it to the principal's list.

If he decides it is not important and he chooses not to use the physical education person to check the playground, he puts a line through that method on his worksheet. He also goes back to the list he prepared for his visit to the principal, and crosses out item #4.

Let's say he decides to go there with George instead of using the other method. He now has two trips to make to the school and two separate tasks to schedule. Are there other tasks which can't be grouped with these? Yes. Checking the weekly lunch menus to estimate nutritional value of food. How about others? Well, there is the possibility of asking the teacher or

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lunchroom supervisor to give him a report on how George eats. But he knows he has to do some other things before he can find out if he can use this method.

We have now identified three separate tasks which need to be done first:

1. Meeting with the principal
2. Checking the playgound with George
3. Checking the weekly school lunch menus.

George's advocate has already thought through the need for the first two tasks. What about the third? Does he need to do that? Will it give him useful information? It certainly is not going to be complete. It will be correct in certain ways and in some ways it's "short". He can go through the back Sunday papers to get 5 to 10 menus. He can use his knowledge of nutrition to check each day's menu for balance of protein and carbohydrates. He can check it for "appeal" against what he already knows about George's eating habits. By using this "formal report," the advocate can get some information about two concerns he has about George's eating situation. So he decides to use it.

Next George's advocate thinks about the order in which he will carry out the three tasks. The question he asks is: Should any of these tasks naturally or logically come before the others? Or are they so separate or different the order doesn't matter? In this example the answer to both questions is yes. Tasks 2 and 3 are so different, it doesn't matter which you do first, considering logical order. But if we were George's advocate, we would do BOTH 2 and 3 before we did the first task.

The reasons are probably clear to you, but we'll say them anyway. Doing task 3 before task 1 helps to prepare the advocate for his eventual visit with the school dietitian. He will already have some information about nutritional quality of food and he may be able to use it to be more specific about his questions. The information also may help him in his question about food appeal. If he can arrange to have lunch at school on his first visit, he may schedule it on a day when he knows George doesn't like what's on the menu. This will provide a stronger test of George's finicky eating habits than going on a day when George loves everything on the menu.

The reason for doing task 2 before task 1 is a little different. If he finds neither poison ivy nor unsafe equipment, he has completed monitoring those concerns for a good period of time. He will check both again and on a scheduled basis, but this result of monitoring does not prepare him for further monitoring activities because there are none. On the other hand, suppose he finds either poison ivy or unsafe equipment. He now has added reasons for seeing the principal as soon as possible. He can add to this list of items for the meeting with the principal his concern over George's chronic allergy to poison ivy, and the fact that he has discovered poison ivy on the playground.

Doing task 2 first helps him to be more efficient. He is combining laying groundwork for monitoring certain situations with immediate advocacy action for George.

Caution: We recognize *the above situation can be tricky*. The advocate wants to start off in a friendly, cooperative manner, so he can get into the school to monitor. Now he has information to give the principal, and he doesn't know

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how she will react. If she reacts defensively, because of the way the advocate approaches her, or because of "vested interests," this may badly affect his chances of getting in to monitor other situations. If she sees the advocate helping her protect the school children and George against harm, then he may be in an even better position to get what he wants. He has helped her protect her interests.

Be careful in this kind of situation. Think through the approach you should take, considering all the possible risks or advantages.

Based on this kind of thinking, George's advocate reorders the list of tasks. If there is not a natural or logical ordering among certain tasks, he arranges the order on what he felt most important to do first, depending on how he listed the situations on WORKSHEET 2.

The reordered list looks like this:

1. Check weekly school lunch menus
2. Check playground with George
3. Meet with principal

The next step is to think about how much time it will take to get each task done. He knows he can get the menus quite easily, and he knows about how much time it will take him to check out each one for nutrition. He figures the whole task will take him no more than 4 hours. Checking the playground with George will probably take 1½ to 2 hours, including getting ready to go, driving time back and forth, and actually walking around the playground with George.

He looks at the third item, and decides to make an appointment by phone, possibly around lunch time at school. The three items on his list will probably require no more than 30 minutes to discuss, including social amenities, but he doesn't know yet about the playground situation, or whether it will be convenient in that same visit to meet the dietitian, George's teacher, and/or the lunchroom supervisor. He decides to leave himself at least an hour and a half, depending on what he finds out doing task 2, and what happens in the meeting.

Next he sits down with his calendar to see where he can combine these three tasks with other activities he has planned. He schedules the menu task over a period of two nights. He decides to check with George about going to the playground the next night. He decides to wait until he completes these two tasks before calling the principal for an appointment, but supposes he will be able to schedule it for the next week.

This is the kind of process you can go through in preparing your schedule for monitoring. As you begin to monitor you will note that you occasionally have to readjust your schedule because of things you can't control (like the principal being out of town for two weeks), or things you didn't think about or know about. Learning to use this step-by-step process will help you become more efficient.

By way of review and summary, here is the outline of all the steps in b) Scheduling the collection of information:

1) Decide what situations you want to monitor first—use WORKSHEET 2 to list all situations in order of importance.

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2) Using WORKSHEET 3:
   a) Separate situations into more specific concerns.
   b) Consider methods to collect information about each concern.
   c) Consider scheduling requirements for monitoring each concern.

3) Organize your schedule of monitoring
   a) Group activities that fit together.
   b) Make a list of the different tasks to be done.
   c) See if there is a natural or logical order in which to do the different tasks.
   d) Make estimates of how much time it will take to do each task.
   e) Using your calendar, actually schedule the day or days you will do each task.

There is one more thing we want you to consider before you actually begin to monitor. You are about to begin collecting information. You should consider how you are going to keep track of it as you collect it. We will give you some suggestions in the next section.

c. Keeping Track of the Information Collected

One reason why we spent so much time going through a careful process of planning was to make this task easier. On WORKSHEET 1, we asked you to list different situations you wanted to monitor and to note the questions or concerns you had about each situation. On WORKSHEET 3, we asked you to be even more specific by listing a method of collecting information alongside each question. You probably noticed that the more specific you were able to be in asking questions, the easier it was to select a method for answering the questions. The same thing applies to keeping track of the information.

To see what we mean let's go back to George Forbes. Think about the advocate's concerns in the school playground situation.

Concern 1: Is there poison ivy on the playground?
Concern 2: Is the equipment safe?

At any moment in time, the answer to these questions is either yes or no. It's fairly easy to check on these kinds of concerns. It is also easy to keep track of information collected about this kind of question. Take another example, the school lunchroom situation.

Concern 1: What is the nutritional quality of food?

It is not so easy to answer this kind of question. It will take more effort to come to a decision about whether it is good or bad. George's advocate will need to break that question down further if he is to answer it well: Is each meal well balanced? Are the portions large enough? What about the quality of food purchased? What kind of chemicals are added to packaged food? How much fresh food is used? How is the food prepared? Does food preparation help or hurt nutritional value? These are only some of the questions he needs to answer before he can answer his more general question about nutrition. He must also be able to keep track of the information he collects on each question.

Let's take one more concern about the lunchroom situation to highlight a different point.

Concern 2: How much does George eat?

Let's assume George's advocate was able to use two methods to collect

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information about this question. He used direct observation and he was able to get the lunchroom supervisor to pay attention to George at lunch time. At the end of a two week period he checked with the supervisor for her report. Here we have information from two different methods. It refers to the same question, but the information from two different methods should be separated. It makes it easier to handle when you come to review it later on.

Another thing to keep in mind is the less you know about a situation, the harder it is to ask specific questions about it. This difficulty increases as the situation increases in complexity. In monitoring this kind of situation you need to be very careful about keeping track of information. You may not get specific answers to specific questions, because you haven't been able to figure out what they are. But you will receive a kind of information that will be valuable to you. You will at the very least have certain impressions, certain thoughts and feelings about what you experienced there.

To help yourself get to know more about the situation you're monitoring, you should keep track of these impressions, too.

We have suggested some things to consider in keeping track of the information you are going to get from monitoring. Here again, you should be systematic about it. Make a record of information you collect. You may begin by merely keeping notes on the situations you monitor. Later on you may be able to figure out a way to construct your own worksheets and forms for monitoring particular situations.

We'll give you two examples to show you what we mean. On the next page is a form like the kind we used while directly observing a child in a situation. It's called the Direct Observation Record. Note that at the top there are spaces to record the usual information about area, child, and date. There is a space for the particular place, like the classroom, swimming pool, or 4-H barn. You can also note the time of day and how long you observed. You may not always need this kind of information. But if you want to keep track of how many times you directly observed learning situations in the morning against how many in the afternoon, the time of day space will help you. Recording how long you observe a situation can help you keep track of your time. And, if you come to an advocacy action situation which involves information collected in direct observation, your record helps you pinpoint exactly when you were there.

Let's look at the column on the far left. Here you record just what it says: What is Taking Place? Not what you *think* is taking place—you do that in another column. Describe, with keywords, phrases or sentences, what you see taking place in terms of the physical actions of the people: "George sitting at desk looking at arithmetic book. Now looking out window. Teacher walking around room. Now stops to talk with Alice Kelly." You can never write a perfect description. Don't try. Pay most attention to your child and what he's doing, but note things about the total situation that will help you remember what is going on.

The middle column is headed: Noteworthy Circumstances. Here you record any general or specific circumstances you think are worth noting. Things like: "Room is cold, class interrupted four times in 20 minutes by messages over intercom, walls covered with examples of children's work."

The right hand column is where you note impressions and questions.

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Here's where you can try to capture your thoughts and feelings about the situation. It's where you can go beyond describing what is taking place in physical actions and make notes on how the atmosphere feels to you, how your child seems to be feeling, and how other adults and children involved in the situation seem to be feeling. Look at Examples A and B on the next pages to see how they can be used to record information from directly observing a situation.

This form is helpful because it forces you to pay closer attention to the situation. If you have to write something down to describe what is going on, you have to first see what is going on, think about it, then write it down. The other columns help you the same way. You have the *General Framework For Thinking About What to Look For*, page 17, in your head, but the form is in front of you to capture what you observe, think and feel about the situation. Be careful you don't spend so much time writing on the form you lose track of what's happening.

This type of form is best used when you are monitoring a situation you don't know much about. After you get to know a situation well, and you are asking more specific questions about it, you may want to construct other types of forms better suited to your purpose.

The second form is an information log.

It's WORKSHEET 4, on page 59. You can use it in different ways. You can use it to keep a continuous record of information collected about the different situations you are monitoring in the same area. You also can use it to keep a continuous record of information collected on only one situation. If you know you're going to be collecting a lot of information on a particular situation, it's best to keep all the information together on the same Information Log.

You will no doubt have other types of forms to record information. You may have formal reports, notes on your meetings with different people, including your child, and notes on reports made to you by other people who monitored for you. You can use the Information Log to keep track of all this information. Simply note the situation the report is about on the log, note the date you received it, and either put down a quick summary of the important points in the report or write: See Report X on so-and-so under the information column.

Look at WORKSHEET 4, Examples A and B to get an idea of how to use the Information Log. Example A shows a continuous record of information collected on several situations in the same area. Example B shows a continuous record of information on one situation.

You will be collecting quite a lot of information, so you may want to get some file folders. To begin, you will need at least one folder for each area: Home, School, Neighborhood, and Community. If you really want to be fancy about filing, you could use a separate folder for each child activity (listed on WORKSHEET 1). What you'd have then, would be a filing system looking like this:

Home	**School**	**Neighborhood**	**Community**
1. Eating	Eating	Eating	Eating
2. Learning	Learning	Learning	Learning
3. Sleeping/ Resting	etc.	etc.	etc.

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4. Playing/
   Recreation
5. Personal
   Cleanliness
6. Working
7. Other

This method requires at least 28 file folders, and space to store them. It provides a way to organize all the information, but you may not need all these files in all four areas. Then you've got extra files you don't need, to add clutter to your filing system.

Brief Review

Keeping track of collected information in the different ways we've suggested will help you in several ways.

1. It helps you to be systematic. For every question you raise about a situation you should have an answer. If you're reviewing your materials for monitoring and you dont find an answer, it may remind you that you haven't monitored the situation yet.

2. Writing the information down in some form helps you to think more carefully about the situation and what you really know about it. If you've already tried this with the different worksheets, you know what we mean. It is usually much harder to write down in clear language what you know, than it is to just think about it in your head.

3. Keeping good records will help you in both assessment and advocacy action. Careful description and good records about circumstances in a situtation help you decide if a change is needed. Once you decide a change is needed, you can use the records to help you convince others that change is needed.

5. COLLECTING THE INFORMATION

This is the last step in the monitoring process. It's the step during which you actually monitor the situations you have planned for up to now. Do it. Good luck!

Things to Keep in Mind While Monitoring

1. Be careful about how many items you try to cover in any one meeting. Don't plan to spend more time with a person than you think is necessary. Too much time and too many items can tire you both out.

2. You will come across new situations you'll want to check as you get into monitoring. Add them to worksheet 1, using a new worksheet if you need it. Then go through the same process you used to begin with, to monitor it.

3. Review your worksheets from time to time to make sure you are remembering to do everything you set out to do.

4. Keep good track of your information. Remember, taking the time to write it down will help you think more clearly about what you actually know or don't know.

5. Once you are sure a particular situation is going pretty well for your child, reduce the time you spend monitoring it. Continue to be systematic, but with less frequency. Reducing time spent monitoring one situation gives you more time to spend on others, and more time to spend on assessing or advocacy action.

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B. Assessing

You will recall Assessing as the second of the three main tasks in the advocacy process. Earlier, we gave a simple definition:

Assessing—deciding whether a change is needed in any situation your child is in.

We also said assessing any situation can result in only one of three possible outcomes. You decide it's good. You decide it's bad. Or you can't decide, in which case you carry out focused monitoring.

Assessing certain situations or circumstances is very easy. If your three-year-old child wanders out into heavy traffic, you don't have to go through a careful process to make a decision about the situation. If George Forbes' advocate finds poison ivy on the path to the playground, he knows there is a bad circumstance for George in that situation. He knows it as soon as he gets the information.

It's easy to assess this situation because the advocate was looking for a particular circumstance. He knew beforehand if he found poison ivy, its very presence would be bad for his child. The better you can be prepared to assess a situation before you monitor it, the easier the task of assessment becomes.

Let's repeat this point to emphasize its importance: The better you get to know a situation, and what should and should not be there; the better you know your child, and what is good or not good for him—the easier it is to assess that situation for your child.

We'd like to present a series of steps you can use to assess situations and their circumstances. By this time, you already have some ideas about many of the steps, but we want to list them all to be as complete as possible. Then you can use the list (summary version, pp 41, 42) later on as a check to see if you've done everything, or to suggest some different things you can try if you get bogged down.

Say you've spent several weeks monitoring a particular situation that is fairly complicated:

There are several circumstances involved in it.

You knew a little bit about the general situation to begin with, and you've learned quite a bit more about it through careful monitoring.

As a result of your experience you have been able to separate the situation into some specific questions and concerns which reflect at least some of the circumstances.

You have collected a fair amount of information about the different circumstances.

You decide it's time to review all the information to try to assess the situation.

Here are steps you may find helpful to follow:

General Process of Assessing Situations

1. Put all the information about the situation in front of you.
2. Review all the information and make the following checks:
   a. Is the information arranged so you have answers to particular questions next to each question you asked? If not, you can either:
      1) Stop assessment till you have the information, or
      2) Continue assessing other parts of the situation, but withhold assessment about that particular question.

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b. Is the information complete in other ways? Does your review suggest you still need more information you didn't think about?
If so, you can either:
1) Stop assessment and get it, or
2) Continue assessing other parts, but withold assessment about the particular question. (Depending on how important the question is, you may want to withhold completing assessment on the whole situation.)

c. Is the information correct? Think about which kinds of information you can be certain about, and which you better not count on too heavily. Is some of it subject to filters? Is some of its suspect because the method you used may have changed the situation? Chances are good that most of your information is usable for assessment. But it's important to think again about how useful, and how much you can rely on it, so you won't make a decision on incorrect or not very good information. If you have the unlucky experience of collecting information that is not useful or is incorrect, or you can't trust it, return to monitoring, this time being sad about extra work, but wiser.

Note: As you can see, these two steps merely help you get ready for the decision making part of assessment. If you find you don't have all the information you need you can get it before continuing assessment. If you find you don't have all the information you want, BUT you can still make an attempt at assessment, go ahead with it. We call that a tentative assessment—one that may be risky because it's based on incomplete information, but one that can give you beginning ideas which can help you as you continue to monitor and assess the situation.

3. Carefully consider the information about each circumstance. Try to make a decision about it. Is it good for your child? Is it bad for your child? Does it need to be changed? Or can't you decide?

   If you can decide, continue your assessment of the different circumstances of the situation. If you can't decide about whether a particular circumstance is good or bad, make a note of it, and continue with the others. After you finish, make a list of good circumstances, a list of bad circumstances, and a list of circumstances you can't decide about.

4. Look at your list of circumstances you can't decide about.

   a. How important are they to the situation?
      1) If some of them are quite important, you may need to stop assessment until you can decide about them.
      2) If some of them are not too important, you can put them aside for now, and continue your assessment.

   b. If some of them are important to the point you need to stop assessment, here's what you can do. If you can't decide, it could be for one of two reasons: either, you don't have enough information, or you don't know how to make sense out of the information in order to decide about it. In the first case: go to *focused monitoring*. In the second case: you can either use EXTRA RESOURCES, or go to *focused monitoring*. By using Extra Resources you can try to find some person who knows about that kind of situation to help you make sense out of the information. As you already know, it doesn't have to be a person, it could be some kind of written material about the situation—books, articles, etc. Extra Resources provide you with information which can help you make sense out of the other information.

      Whether you use focused monitoring or Extra Resources, for each circumstance you need to decide about:
      1) Collect enough information to help you make a decision.
      2) Make a decision.
      3) Add each circumstance to either the list of good circumstances or bad circumstances, depending on the outcome of your decisions.

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Think about step 4 as a kind of monitoring side step you take from the Assessment task because you didn't have everything you needed to complete the task. Now we're back with the separate lists of good and bad circumstances we made at the end of step 3.

5. Up till now you've considered each circumstance separately. Now it's time to look at them in other ways.
   a. Look at the list of bad circumstances.
      1) Is any circumstance so bad for your child and what you want for him it either needs to be changed or you need to get him out of the situation?
      2) Is any combination of them so bad they need to be changed or you need to remove your child?
      3) Are there any you think your child can live with, and you can live with, even though they are not good?
      4) Are there any circumstances in the third group, above, that even though you and your child can live with them, can be changed without great effort?
      5) If, after you complete this kind of separation of circumstances, you have placed certain circumstances in either 1, 2, or 4, list them accordingly and have them ready for Advocacy Action.
   b. Look at the list of good circumstances.

      What is your child getting out of the situation? How do the good circumstances compare with the bad? Through this comparison can you reconsider the bad circumstances in terms of what you and he can live with, in order to continue to enjoy the good?
   c. This kind of consideration should help you decide what to do:

      If the bad circumstances still far outweigh the good circumstances, probably the best thing for you to do is remove him from the situation, rather than try to change it.

      If the good circumstances far outweigh the bad, either you can decide to live with the bad, or try to get some of them changed.

      If by comparison you come out somewhere in between the two possibilities stated above, you have the three choices to make:
      1) Remove your child from the situation,
      2) Live with and let your child live with the bad,
      3) Try to get some of them changed.

      If you decide to leave your child in the situation, and try to change certain bad circumstances, keep your list of circumstances you want to change ready for Advocacy Action.

Focused Monitoring

Focused monitoring is nothing more than monitoring activity we've already described, carried out with perhaps more careful attention on a particular situation. If you need more information to help you make a decision about a situation, you take another look at the situation to figure out how to get the information. You may:

1. Try to break the situation down more carefully into its parts, so you can be more specific about your questions or concerns.
2. Think more carefully about selecting methods to get the information, perhaps using methods different from the ones you've already used, to get a different view of the situation.

   Thus, you might consider directly observing the situation with a person who knows more about that type situation, you might get an "expert" to monitor for you, and report to you.
3. Try to seek Extra Resources, to get a better idea about how to break down the situation, or how best to monitor it.

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We call it focused monitoring to separate it in time from "regular" monitoring. You monitored, tried to assess, and weren't able to, so you "focus" in to monitor again. The process is basically the same.

These five steps make up the Assessment process. Let's remove all the little details to give you a summary. You don't need to read it now. Use it later as a checklist.

General Process of Assessing Situations, Summary

1. Put all the information about the situation in front of you.
2. Review all the information and make the following checks:
   a. Is the information arranged for easy review?
      Do you actually have everything you need?
      If not, either:
      1) Stop assessment until you can get it, or
      2) Continue assessment of other parts.
   b. Is the information complete in other ways?
      If not, either:
      1) Stop assessment until you get it.
      2) Continue assessment and make a tentative assessment.
   c. Is the information correct?
      If not, revise monitoring approach and get correct information.
3. Carefully considering the information about each circumstance, separate them into the following groups:
   a. List of good circumstances
   b. List of bad circumstances
   c. List of circumstances you can't decide about
4. Carefully consider the list of circumstances you can't decide about.
   a. Considering their relative importance, separate them into two groups:
      1) Circumstances so important you need to stop assessment to decide about them.
      2) Circumstances you can put aside for now.
   b. If some of them are important enough to stop assessment, look each one on the list over carefully and decide:
      1) Which ones you need more information on. For these go to focused monitoring.
      2) Which ones you can't make sense out of with the information you have. For these use extra resources, or go to focused monitoring.
   c. For each circumstance you need to decide about:
      1) Collect enough information to make a decision.
      2) Make the decision.
      3) Add each circumstance to either the list of good circumstances or the list of bad circumstances, depending on your decision.
5. Consider the lists of good and bad circumstances.
   a. Look at the list of bad circumstances.
      1) Is any circumstance so bad for your child and what you want for him it either needs to be changed or you need to remove him from the situation?
      2) Is any combination of them so bad they need to be changed or you need to remove him?
      3) Are there any you think your child can live with, and you can live with, even though they are not good?

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4) Are there any circumstances in the third group, above, that even though they can be lived with, they also can be changed without great effort?
5) Prepare a list of all circumstances you placed in either 1), 2), or 4) above.

b. Look at the list of good circumstances.
Considering what your child is getting out of the situation, are there any ways in which you want to change the list you prepared in a. 5), above?

c. Considering a. & b., together, decide what to do about the situation. Either:
1) Remove your child from the situation, or
2) Live with and let your child live with the bad circumstances, or
3) Try to get some of the bad circumstances changed.

Let's take a fairly simple situation to show how the assessment process works. An advocate finds out the following information about his son, Tom's, summer baseball program situation: The coach is very concerned about winning, even to the point that he lies about the age of some of his team members. He's a bad sport, a bad loser—sets a bad example for the team. He only allows the best kids to play, meaning Tom plays very little. The coach really drives the kids hard, always yelling at them in practice and at games, making them feel bad every time they foul up. He seldom praises anybody when they do things right.

On the other hand, Tom says he really wants to stay on the team, even though he says and looks like he doesn't enjoy it much. He likes the other guys and gets along very well with them. He is getting some good exercise (but maybe too much), getting a chance to develop physical coordination and athletic skills. And he's enjoying the experience of belonging to a winning team.

If you were Tom's advocate, how would assess this situation? It's partly good and partly bad. You could:

1. Decide the good circumstances outweight the bad circumstances, and live with the bad circumstances for the rest of the season.
2. Decide the bad circumstances outweight the good so much so that you need to remove Tom from the situation.
3. Decide to try to change some of the bad circumstances of the situation.

If you select decision 1 or 2, you know what to do. If you select decision 3, you then must decide which circumstances you want to change. At this point, the task of assessment is to try to carefully define the circumstances (if they are not already obvious) in a way that helps you know what change is needed.

Sometimes you can't know if you can change certain circumstances until you get further into planning stages of advocacy action. It depends on how complicated the situation is, and how much information you have. The most important thing is to be able to decide, at this point, what circumstances about the situation need changing.

Let's look at some possibilities if we choose decision 3. What are the bad circumstances?

1. Coach is dishonest about age of some team members, the boys know it, and you know it because Tom told you.
2. Coach is a bad sport, bad loser, sets bad example for kids.
3. Coach drives kids too hard, could be health danger.
4. Coach always grousing at them for mistakes, never gives praise.

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Well, one obvious change you've already thought of is to get rid of the coach. You thought of it before we listed each of the bad circumstances. It's not an unlikely possibility. The information you have about how he acts could mean he doesn't enjoy coaching. If so, he may willingly step aside.

What about other changes? Do you think it may be possible to get him to change the way he acts? Probably the best chance of doing that would be for the first circumstance, his dishonesty. Not that dishonesty is easy to change. But letting him know in some way that a report about the kids' ages could go to the league committee could change that dishonesty. It may be much more difficult to change the other three. But it's possible.

Another way to change the situation is to add something to it. In this case, the right kind of assistant coach might be able to reduce the effect of the coach's actions. By adding an assistant, the coach's actions may not change, but the kids have someone else to pay attention to, and that reduces their attention to the bad actions of the coach. The right assistant could also take the strain out of practice by calling rest breaks and giving praise.

Let's think about this example and the *General Process of Assessing Situations*. You may have noticed we did not rigidly follow the step-by-step procedure. We skipped Steps 1 & 2 completely, because we had enough information to make a decision. We had our list of good and bad circumstances all set up for us in the way we arranged the information. We did separate out the bad circumstances to take a more careful look at each of them separately. We used that list, together with the good circumstances, to think about different routes we might follow in making up our minds about what to do. We also considered three changes that may be possible.

You can do the same kind of thing. Use the list of steps as a general guide, but if you don't need to go through all the steps, don't do it. We included as many as we did to try to help you keep several important points in mind as you assess situations.

There are two other "levels" of assessment to consider. We have just discussed assessing a particular situation in a particular area. We now want to cover: 1. Assessing groups of situations in each area, and 2. Assessing the four areas, (home, school, neighborhood, community) together.

Assessment of All Situations Within a Particular Area

The process you use is very much like the process for assessing situations. But it's not so trying on your patience. There are fewer details to pay attention to, especially if you've been very careful in your assessment of each situation in a particular area. Basically what you do is to look at all the situations you have monitored and assessed in a particular area. Then consider how many of them are good and how many are bad. Use Step 5 of the process for assessing situations, if you want to.

This level of assessment will help you in a variety of ways. It gives you an overall view or general assessment of the area. If you find only one or two bad situations in nine or ten or more, you can see things are going pretty well for your child in that area. If you see that nine or ten situations out of a dozen situations are bad, it may give you some different approaches when you think about Advocacy Action. Instead of trying to change all the bad circumstances in nine or ten situations you may decide to move your child to a new area.

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It may also help you in thinking about the kinds of changes that are actually possible, and different ways to bring them about. If you have a good overall view of most situations in a given area, you may know something about one situation you can use to change a bad circumstance in another.

Assessment of the Four Areas, Together

This process is the same as for Assessing Groups of Situations in each area. The reasons for doing it are very much the same, too. It gives you an overall view of how your child is getting along in all areas. It can suggest possible methods and resources to make a change in a particular area, or it can give you information that will help you decide if a particular change is really necessary.

This concludes our discussion of Assessing. We have discussed a process for assessing situations and their circumstances; groups of situations within each area; and looking at all four areas, together.

If you come out of the assessment process with particular changes that you know are needed, take them to the next section on Advocacy Action. If you don't continue your monitoring to keep in close touch with your child and the situations he is in. Read the next section to become familiar with the process of Advocacy Action.

C. Advocacy Action

When you decide that a change is needed, you move into the next phase of the advocacy process—action to bring about change. Advocacy action involves three tasks:

1. Developing a plan for changing the situation.
2. Carrying out the plan.
3. Evaluating to make sure the plan is carried out and to find out whether it accomplishes what it was supposed to for the child.

These three tasks are very important to each other. Developing a plan without carrying it out may be good mental exercise, but it won't change the situation by itself. Acting without planning or evaluating can result in dangerous mistakes, waste of resources, or not knowing whether what you are doing is good for the child. And you cannot evaluate how you are doing unless you have a clear idea of what you are trying to do.

1. DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR CHANGING THE SITUATION

Always develop a plan for action before you try to intervene to change what is happening to the child. You have decided a change is needed, based on solid information about it. You have some idea about *what* needs to be changed. You may already have some good ideas about how it needs to be changed. Now you have to figure out the best way to change it. Good planning will help you do that. It also will make it easier for you to work with others or explain to them why you are acting in a certain way. In the long run, taking the time to think through what you are going to do will make your action more focused, less costly, and more successful in getting things changed for the child.

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Steps in The Planning Process

a. Identifying What You Will Try to Do

The first step in planning advocacy action is carefully listing the circumstances which caused you to decide that the situation needed changing. The next step is to list alongside each circumstance the kind of change needed. We have prepared another worksheet for you. Worksheet 5 will help you structure your thinking about these two steps.

Let's take an example. You have learned from your monitoring that the community playground the child usually plays at is filled with dangerous equipment and other safety hazards. In assessing the situation, you may decide the danger to the child is so great you should do something about it. As a first step toward deciding what you will do, you make a list of the circumstances about the playground which make it dangerous. Look at WORKSHEET 5, Example A. Your list may include the items listed under Unsatisfactory Circumstances. As you consider the things about the situation that make it unsatisfactory, decide which one(s) *you* will try to change: that is, identify the circumstances on which you will focus your advocacy action.

Now it's time for you to move from a general concern such as "child plays on dangerous playground" to a decision about the particular change or changes you will try to bring about in order to reduce that danger. What you will try to change at the playground might look something like the list on the WORKSHEET. By identifying the focus of your action in as specific terms as possible, you put yourself in a good position to consider how you will go about changing things. Deciding just what problem you are trying to solve makes deciding how to solve it much easier.

b. Thinking of Ways to Change Things

Once you have a clear idea of exactly what you want to change, you are ready to think about possible ways of bringing that change about. The next step is to look at each circumstance and try to think of different ways to get the change you want. If you want to come up with the best way to accomplish what you want to see happen for the child, it is very useful to have more than one possibility to choose from. Use your imagination. Do not dismiss an idea at this stage just because it seems "wild" or impossible when you first think of it. One idea leads to another; concentrate on getting as many as you can. Wait until later to examine each one and compare them with each other. Keep "brainstorming" until you have a good list. Be creative. Don't worry about how reasonable or practical they are at this step.

To continue with the playground example, if the poor upkeep of the playground is the circumstance you are focusing on changing, your list of possible ways to improve the way it is kept might include:

Approach the city recreation department and urge them to do a better job of upkeep.
Get people in the neighborhood to pitch in and fix it up.
Find a child who has been injured on the playground due to unrepaired equipment and sue the city for damages.
Complain to a member of the city council.
Invite a newspaper reporter to do an "expose".

You should write down a list of alternative courses of action

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for each unsatisfactory circumstance about the playground. Remember, there are many different ways to solve most problems. You will increase your chances of coming up with one that is going to work if you think about several.

c. Testing the Alternatives for Action

After you have identified alternative ways to bring about the change, it is time to ask hard questions about them. Ask yourself the following questions about each one:

1. What kind of resources will it take?
2. Do I have or can I get those resources?
3. How likely is it to work?
4. Can anything bad happen to the child if I act this way?
5. Can anything bad happen to anyone else if I act this way?
6. How will it affect my ability to advocate for the child in the future?
7. Is there anything illegal or unethical about it?
8. Is it something I feel comfortable about doing?
9. Is it something I can do by myself or will I need other people to help me?
10. If it is something I should do myself, do I know how to do it?
11. If I need other people, can I get them to help me?
12. How long will it take to produce results for the child?
13. What are the chances that it will make things worse instead of better?
14. What does the child think about it?

Asking these questions will help you determine whether a particular method is likely to work. It will help you decide if it will be worth what it costs. It will make you aware of possible "side effects". Then you can think about whether or not you can accept them. It will help you identify those methods requiring too much time. You will see which ones you do not have the resources to carry out. There is no way to predict everything. But such testing will help you dismiss those methods which are clearly impossible for you. It will help you spell out the advantages and disadvantages of the others.

You might realize, for example, that getting people to fix up the playground would be faster than trying to get the city to do it. But one neighborhood fix-up may encourage the city to let the playground get in bad shape again. They may just wait for the neighborhood to do something about it. Or, you may think that taking the city to court would have a great impact on the way the recreation department keeps this playground and all other playgrounds in the city in the future; but you may also see that it will take too long to protect your child by going to court or that the court action is likely to back-fire due to some legal technicality.

We hope you see this kind of questioning as an important, useful step. This type of questioning should help you narrow your list down to two, three or four different methods that can be used. In the next step you will make a choice among them. If your first choice does not work for some reason, you can select another which you have already considered carefully.

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d. Deciding What You Will Do

Deciding which course of action to pursue will not be hard if you have done a good job of testing the alternatives. Always look for the simplest action to bring about the change you want. If a single reminder to the recreation department will get the playground repaired and see that it is cared for in the future, it is foolish to spend time trying to get people to fix it up or start out on a long legal journey. Don't use dynamite when a firecracker will accomplish the desired result. On the other hand, you must make sure your action is strong enough to bring about the change you want. There are a number of jobs that a firecracker cannot do. If the action you decide to take is dynamite, be careful how you use it. Make sure beforehand it will not blow up things you cannot afford to destroy.

There will probably be times when you decide none of the different courses of action can be used. You may see that any action you know will work is beyond the resources you can mobilize. You may realize the course of action which seems most likely to bring about the specific change you want would be so explosive it would do more harm than good. Or you may come to the conclusion the problem as you have defined it is simply one for which you cannot even think of a solution.

When you find yourself in this uncomfortable spot, you can try several things. Check first to see if you can think of any other methods. Look over some of the methods you have crossed out be testing. Do any of them seem more possible, at this point?

If you get no help by doing that, see if you can find a smaller or less complicated problem to work on. Try looking at what is happening to the child in a different way to see if you can identify something to do to improve his situation, even though it is not a solution to the "real" problem. You may decide you can't get that playground repaired. So, you decide to work on keeping the child away from it by finding him a safer place to play.

At times, you may be forced to conclude the situation is one you cannot do anything about. You must recognize the limits of your own power. Try not to let feelings of failure or anger interfere with your ability to work on changing those things you can do something about. Instead, continue to pay attention to the situation you cannot change. Watch for new chances and ways to intervene. Keep looking for the kinds of resources which will make it possible for you to change it.

e. Making the Plan for Action

After you select your course of action, begin formulating a detailed plan of what will happen. Your plan should deal with the following considerations:

1. What will be done first, second, and so on?
2. If more than one person is involved in carrying it out, who will do what and when will they do it?
3. If any other resources are needed how will they be gathered?
4. If predictable problems or snags occur, how will they be handled?
5. How much time, money, etc., will it take to do each part of the plan?
6. Is there a need to make appointments, arrange transportation for myself or others, get materials, etc.?

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Good planning gives you a map of how you can move a situation from where it is to where it should be. Having a map you really understand always reduces the chance that you will get hopelessly lost along the way.

f. Reviewing the Plan

It may be very useful for you to find someone who is willing to review your planning. Asking for a review shows you recognize the dangers in trying to solve difficult problems which affect another person's life.

Sometimes you can use someone who knows the child. Sometimes you may need to call on someone who has special training or experience in how to do what you want to do.

By exposing your ideas and plans to others, you may gain a new perspective on the problem, have additional courses of action for solving it suggested, or get a more complete testing of the actions you generated yourself. In addition, when your planning has been reviewed and found satisfactory by someone whose judgment you trust, you will be more confident about taking action.

2. CARRYING OUT THE PLAN FOR ACTION

Carrying out your plan for action is the next important step in the advocacy process. With a detailed plan for what you want to do and how you are going to do it, you are ready to begin your efforts to change a particular situation. This is what child advocacy is all about. But before you do it, check the next section.

3. EVALUATING YOUR ADVOCACY ACTION

You should begin to evaluate your own activity and its results as soon as you start carrying out your plan for action. Systematic evaluation will tell you whether things are going as you planned or if you need to change the plan to get the results you want. You should identify ways to check on how things are going in your plan. To find out how you are doing ask yourself these questions:

Am I (or are the other people involved) doing what my plan calls for and doing it on schedule?

Is the plan proceeding smoothly or has it run into problems or broken down?

If the plan is running into snags or breaking down, what is causing the trouble?

If the plan has been fully implemented, did it work?

If the plan did not work, why not?

Suppose you developed a plan for getting people in the neighborhood to repair the equipment and improve the grounds. Your plan called for you to contact a certain number of parents of children who play there. You want them to meet to discuss ways to make the playground safer. You decide to evaluate this action step by making a list of the parents you want to contact. You make a note of how each one responds to your suggestion and review whether most of the responses are positive or negative as you go along. Finding out at this stage that parents are not interested in meeting for this purpose could help you avoid spending time and energy on this plan. If the

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plan goes smoothly and the parents do meet and decide to fix up the playground, you would check to make sure that the repairs are actually made and then make sure the playground is actually safer as a result.

If you do not check to see that you are following your plan, you may come to an important step only to realize you forgot to do something earlier which is vital to the success of this step. Finally, if you implement your plan "perfectly" but do not stay around to check on whether it accomplishes what it was supposed to, you may feel good because you did everything according to plan, but you will have neglected to ask the most important question of all: "Did it work?"

When you discover that your action is not working out according to plan, you can return to an earlier step in the process and assess, plan, or implement again. If you discover that the activities you planned and carried out failed to accomplish your objective, you can return to your list of alternatives and select another course of action to try. If you realize that you did not carry the plan out properly, you can start over. If you learn that none of your alternative courses of action have worked or seem likely to, you may decide you need to redefine the problem and modify the change you will try to bring about. Sometimes your efforts to change things will give you a better understanding of what is actually going on in a situation. As you get closer to the situation you may find out the real problem is different from what you thought in the beginning. When that happens, stop and look again at your interpretation of what is going on and your decision about what should be done about it in light of your new information. There may also be times when you learn your original assessment of a situation was questionable or just plain wrong. You may conclude that what you thought was an unsatisfactory situation does not look nearly so bad uupon closer examination. When that happens, review the results of your earlier monitoring, pay attention to any new information you have, and assess again. Thus evaluating what happens as you try to change things can help you get new insights about the child and his world. It will increase the effectiveness of your activity on his behalf.

Once your evaluation tells you the situation has improved to the point that it is satisfactory, you have completed the action phase of the advocacy process. Now you can return to your monitoring and assessing activity: keep checking systematically on how situations are going for the child and assessing whether it is close enough to what should be happening to be acceptable. So, monitoring and assessing lead to action; and action leads back to monitoring and assessing. And the advocacy process goes on.

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WORKSHEETS

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WORKSHEET 1—EXAMPLE

Child George Weber

Date Filled Out October 12 1973

Area: Home ____
School ✓
Neighborhood ____
Community ____

Date	Activity	Places & Circumstances	Situations To Monitor	Who Is Responsible?
	1 Eating A. lunch	lunchroom kitchen food preparation	Check nutritional value of food. Does he eat it all? or just dessert? If he doesn't eat, check for energy level rest of day	Mrs Smith (teacher) Mrs Gordon, (lunchroom supervisor)
	2 Learning A. reading B. arithmetic C. writing D. spelling E. science F. etc.	classroom, resource room (remedial reading)	Check with teacher about George's progress in all areas. Is he receiving classroom learning in classroom & resource room	Mrs Smith (teacher) Mrs Jones (rdg) Mrs Lewis (reading specialist)
	3 Sleeping/ Resting None known			
	4 Playing/ Recreation A. formal play B. informal play	playground, gym	Check playground for potential injury - Check equipment for safety	Mrs Smith (teacher) Mr Hastings (phys ed teacher)
	5 Personal Cleanliness A. toilet B. washing hands	bathroom, sink	not concerned	probably Mrs Smith
	6 Working A. Clean up around desk	classroom	not concerned	Mrs Smith
	7 Other			

WORKSHEET 1

Child _____
Date Filled Out _____

Area: Home _____
School _____
Neighborhood _____
Community _____

Date	Activity	Places & Circumstances	Situations To Monitor	Who Is Responsible?
	1 Eating			
	2 Learning			
	3 Sleeping/ Resting			
	4 Playing/ Recreation			
	5 Personal Cleanliness			
	6 Working			
	7 Other			

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WORKSHEET 2– EXAMPLE
List of Situations to Monitor *(in order of importance)*

Child Cynthia Ellison Date Sept 14 1974

Home	School	Neighborhood	Community
	1 Check total learning situation 2 Check playground equipment 3 Check cafeteria 4 Check gym education 5. Check classroom discipline methods	6. Check vacant lot (safety) 7 Check Cynthia crossing streets	8. 4-H Program 9. Sunday School

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WORKSHEET 2
List of Situations to Monitor *(in order of importance)*

Child _____ Date _____

Home	School	Neighborhood	Community

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WORKSHEET 3–EXAMPLE

Child George Ferber
Date Filled Out October 13, 1973

Page No. _____
Area: Home _____
School ✓
Neighborhood _____
Community _____

Situation to Monitor	Possible Methods	Scheduling Requirements
1 Eating in lunch room – nutrition	check weekly menus to estimate nutritional value of food.	Collect out of Sunday paper. Arrange to meet dietitian through principal
A Food appealing?	direct observation	Check with principal, find out about lunch-room supervision.
	ask child	After looking over menus and opening to eat lunch. Talk with George about food at school.
B How much does he eat?	direct observation	Same as A - check with principal, ie. May be arrange to meet teacher for lunch, check out lunchroom supervision
C. If not much, energy level, p.n	direct observation ask teacher ask child	
2. Playground situation	direct observation ask child	Check with principal, arrange to meet phys ed person; have meeting on playground, or go down after dinner with George - find out where he plays
A. Poison ivy		
B. Safety of equipment	direct observation	Same as one - check with principal, arrange to meet phys ed. person.

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WORKSHEET 3

Page No. _____

Child _____

Date Filled Out _____

Area: Home _____
School _____
Neighborhood _____
Community _____

Situation to Monitor	Possible Methods	Scheduling Requirements

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WORKSHEET 4 – EXAMPLE
Information Log

Child George Forbes
Date Filled Out October 20, 1973

Area: Home ____
School K
Neighborhood ____
Community ____

Situation/Concerns	Date / Information / Impressions / Questions
1. Classroom learning situation A. General	10/20 See report card. George doing fair (I think) except reading 10/21 See note on meeting. Pres. Allen. Still not clear on how George is doing. Does says everything fine, but not clear on remedial reading or classroom situation 10/24 See direct observation record. Went well. Didn't seem to interfer much at all. Teacher seems good. George seems to work pretty well at school.
B. Achievement	10/30 See notes on teacher meeting. George at grade level in all areas that reading.
C. George's working style	10/30 Teacher says he usually pays attention pretty well and works by himself at seat. Impression she really seems to know George pretty well.
D. Remedial Reading	10/30 See notes meeting with Mrs. Hall, remedial reading teacher. Still not clear on how reading program works

WORKSHEET 4
Information Log

Child _____
Date Filled Out _____

Area: Home _____
School _____
Neighborhood ____
Community _____

Situation/Concerns	Date / Information / Impressions / Questions

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WORKSHEET 5 – EXAMPLE

SITUATION NEEDING CHANGE Playground

Unsatisfactory Circumstances About Situation	Kind of Change Needed
1. No adult supervision when the child is on the playground.	1. Get more adult supervision on the playground
2 Poor design or installation of play equipment	2 Get the equipment repaired and the grounds cut in better shape
3 An open sewer next to the playground	3 Get the child to play on a safer place until the playground improves.
4. Poor upkeep of equipment and grounds	
5. Equipment which would be entirely satisfactory for older children but is too complicated for this child	

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WORKSHEET 5

SITUATION NEEDING CHANGE _____

Unsatisfactory Circumstances About Situation	Kind of Change Needed

DIRECT OBSERVATION RECORD – EXAMPLE

Child George Fisher Place Swimming Pool Area: Home ____ School ____ Neighborhood ____ Community ✓

Date July 1, 1973 Time of Day 3:00 pm How Long Observed? 1½ hours

What Is Taking Place?	Noteworthy Circumstances	Impressions/Questions
George playing with Tom, Mary, Peter and Ted in shallow end. Waving for Penny	Pool area looks clear	Kids really enjoying each other George can swim better than I thought! Red Cross swimming program must be good for him
	Life guards on duty: 3 in chairs one walking Estimate 400 people in pool. Both diving boards seem to have good springs	Wonder about ratio of 4 guards to 400 people – is that safe? Check with Red Cross Water Safety about good ratio
George's kids now go to low diving board.		Check to see how slippery board surface – OK, not slippery
Kids now taking turns diving 5/8	Looks like good pool rules No running. People waiting turn at boards also waiting til diver ahead gets out of way	Good cannonball George
I'm going to join them and check board surface		Situation looks OK Need to check guard/people ratio

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DIRECT OBSERVATION RECORD

Child _____ Place _____ Area: Home _____
School _____
Neighborhood ____
Community _____

Date _____ Time of Day _____ How Long Observed? _____

What Is Taking Place?	Noteworthy Circumstances	Impressions/Questions

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